

F I V E
DISCOURSES

ON THE
TRUTH AND INSPIRATION

OF THE
B I B L E.

PARTICULARLY DESIGNED FOR THE BENEFIT OF YOUTH.

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Published according to Act of Congress.

HARTFORD:
PRINTED BY HUDSON & GOODWIN.

1797.



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THE following Discourses, for substance, were delivered in the place where the writer statedly ministers. What was meant only for a single congregation, is, by the desire of the hearers, now made public. Whether the Book which christians take for their guide, is from heaven or of men, is an inquiry of the highest importance; and in which not a few, at the present time, feel deeply interested from opposite motives. This short summary of the principal arguments in support of revealed religion, is indebted to the defences which have gone before it, and claims no advance in a subject which has employed so many abler pens. It is hoped that this compendious view may be useful to some who have not had access to the large treatises, which have been published on the truth and inspiration of the Bible.

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Discourses on Divine Revelation.

DISCOURSE I.

On the Truth of the Scriptures.

2 TIMOTHY iii. 16.

ALL scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

MINISTERS of the gospel are under high and peculiar obligations, in every age of the church, to bear public testimony in favor of the truth and divine original of the religion which they are called to preach. The performance of this duty

must lie with uncommon weight upon their minds at the present time ; when not a few in America, and vast numbers on the eastern continent, who were educated in the belief of christianity, openly reprobate it, as the offspring of fraud or superstition. It is well known that the disciples of infidelity are multiplying daily, and that they are industriously employed in throwing doubts and scruples relative to the holy scriptures, before the minds of those who have not, as yet, gone over to their side. Whoever has his eyes open to discern the moral complexion of the day, and is friendly to the present and future welfare of mankind, will feel no small concern for the rising generation in particular. Their inexperience, and the warmth of their passions render them liable to become an easy prey to those licentious opinions, which are highly pleasing to the corrupt taste of the human heart.

I REQUEST of you, my young friends, as well as of persons of every age, a candid, serious, and patient hearing, while I adduce some of the leading evidences in support of the truth and inspiration of the Bible, in a more ample manner than I have hitherto done in my public discourses. In prosecuting this design some things will be intro-

duced, which may not, separately considered, be thought very interesting ; but I hope it will appear in the final result, that they are necessary parts of the general subject on which I am entering.

If the bible be a piece of priestcraft, or the work of dishonest politicians, let it be given up, and sink into contempt : But if it be from heaven, as we have the fullest evidence to believe, let it be received with all the reverence due to THE WORD OF THE LORD. Not all the art or sophistry of men will be able to overthrow a book that was dictated by infinite truth : And the guilt of those who make the attempt will be awfully great ; for they will be found even to fight against God !

THOSE persons in christian countries who acknowledge the existence of one God, but deny all revealed religion, have adopted the name of *Deists*. They are far from being agreed among themselves, except in the single point of denying the divine original of the scriptures. A considerable number of deists in the last and present century, have appeared as writers against the truth and inspiration of the bible. Some of them were men of acuteness and learning ; such as Lord Herbert, the Earl of Shaftsbury, Lord

Bolingbroke, Chubb, Hume, Voltaire, Rousseau, and others. Our country has not given birth to any deistical writer of much note. Mr. Thomas Paine, whose zeal for infidelity is well known, was born and educated in England. On his leaving the United States of America, a few years since, he repaired to France, where he soon found the leaders of a large and powerful nation, as warmly engaged as himself for the downfall of the christian religion, and the propagation of infidelity through the world. Those persons who have read Mr. Paine's "Age of Reason," the first and second parts, have no cause to doubt that he has spoken the language of his heart; for he has gone so far as to utter an oath in a formal manner that he is a deist. On his darling theme he has started little or nothing new, nor has he handled the subject so ably as several who went before him; but in impudence and ridicule he has few equals. It is much easier to deal in confident assertions, or to raise a laugh among the thoughtless, than to offer rational conviction to the mind.

It cannot be questioned that many are fond of calling themselves deists or infidels, because they have heard that some great men have done so heretofore, or are doing so at

the present time; though they have never read a syllable that they wrote, and are wholly ignorant of the arguments which they employ in support of their cause. Conversions to infidelity are easily made among those who are void of principle, or are galled by scripture reproofs, or are determined to indulge their lusts. Hence it need not appear strange, that in a season of general licentiousness, many openly renounce the pure religion that came from above.

A LOOSE way of thinking on moral and religious subjects has a strong tendency to blind the mind, and harden the heart. In the history of the New Testament frequent mention is made of the *Sadducees*, a sect who denied a future state, the resurrection of the body, and the existence of angel or spirit. They were among the most bitter enemies of Christ and his apostles. I find no satisfactory proof of the conversion of one of them to christianity. When any have deliberately become unbelievers in the truth and divinity of the scriptures, they have seldom been reclaimed. In most instances they have proceeded from bad to worse, until according to human appearance, they have cut themselves off from hope. God, who hath the hearts of all men in his hand,

is able to arrest infidels of the highest class in their course, and subdue them by his grace ; but we need stronger evidence than has yet appeared, to be sanguine in our expectations that any of them will be recovered from the error of their way. There is room to hope that such as are infidels through inattention may be excited to careful inquiry, and escape from the snare in which they have begun to be entangled ; and that those whose faith is wavering may be settled in the belief that the bible is true and from God. Those who have an anxious desire to be satisfied on so important a subject, will listen with avidity to every attempt to discover the grounds on which the scriptures may be defended, against those who condemn them as fraught with cunningly devised fables.

Pious christians are fully satisfied that the religion which they have embraced is of divine original ; but the holy exercises of their hearts are not to be held up before infidels for their conviction. The latter will say, (and they will declare a fact not to be doubted) that they know nothing about the feelings of christian piety. Hence it may be expected that they will consider all who profess such feelings as enthusiasts, and unworthy of notice. Recourse must be

had to argument ; both to establish the religion in dispute, and to remove objections. The faithful witnesses, though it has been their lot to prophesy a long time. clothed in sackcloth, will not withhold their testimony in favor of the oracles of God. Being not ashamed of their hope they will labor to produce such reasons for its support, as may silence, if they do not convince, gainsayers. The glory of God, and the felicity of his holy intelligent kingdom, are directly promoted by the exhibition of truth, however it may " torment them that dwell on the earth." The friends of revelation feel themselves bound to stand up in its defence : The effects of their exertions they leave with God.

THE words of the Apostle Paul in the text, addressed to Timothy, a young minister, may lead us to attend to the arguments by which the scriptures are demonstrated to be true and from God. It is added in the verse next following, *That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works* : The meaning of which is, that Timothy by attending to the evidences and design of all scripture, would be completely furnished, as a christian and a minister, for the discharge of every duty to which he should be called.

WHEN the apostle declares that *all scripture is given by inspiration of God*, he has particular reference to the writings of the Old Testament. These were the scriptures which Timothy had known from a child, as is mentioned in the verse preceding the text. At the time when Paul wrote this epistle the whole of the new testament had not been committed to writing: But such is the connexion between its several books, and of the whole with the Jewish scriptures, that the two testaments must stand or fall together. Whatever distinct proofs are given of the truth and inspiration of the new testament, and however convincing these may be to a total stranger to the old testament, it is well known to every one who has read the bible with attention, that the four evangelists, the acts of the apostles, and the epistles, abound with quotations from, and allusions to, the writings of Moses and the prophets, on the assumption that they were dictated by the Holy Ghost. Hence, it has always been admitted both by christians and deists, that the two testaments are so interwoven that they must be jointly established, or given up, as the word of the Lord.

THE inspiration of all scripture is not only declared in the text, but its use is pointed

out : *It is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.* It is profitable *for doctrine*, as it directs us what to believe—*for reproof*, as it apprises us of sin and warns us against it—*for correction*, as it recalls us from wandering—and *for instruction in righteousness*, as it inculcates all the duties of piety and virtue, with the proper motives to observe them.

IN discoursing from the text, at this time, it is proposed,

I. To consider the truth of the scriptures of the Old and New Testament.

II. EXPLAIN in what sense the phrase, *Inspiration of God*, is to be understood when applied to *all scripture*.

III. BRING arguments to prove that all scripture is given by inspiration of God.

UNDER each head it is designed to notice several objections, as we pass along in the discourses.

I. LET us consider the truth of the scriptures of the Old and New Testament.

EVERY one will easily discern the propriety of considering the truth of the scriptures,

or the authenticity of these writings, in the first place : since if they could be shown to be a forgery, their inspiration must be given up ; for God will not bear witness in support of a falsehood. Besides, we must be satisfied that the scriptures are true, or contain an authentic narration of facts, before we can be warranted to produce arguments from their history to establish their inspiration.

IN the part of the subject before us, we are to consider the apparent candor and integrity of the men who are said to have penned the Bible ; the circumstances attending the facts they narrate ; the corresponding state of the world ; and the harmony of the several writers of the scriptures, though living in places and periods remote from each other. To these may be added, the testimony of profane writers, or those who have no claim to inspiration.

WHEN we undertake to examine the truth of the *Pentateuch*, or the five first books of the Bible, said to be written by *Moses*, we have not the advantage of appealing to any cotemporary writer. That there was such a man as *Moses*, a leader in Israel, has, I think, never been called in question by any deist ; and may therefore be taken

for granted. He died about fourteen hundred and fifty years before the birth of Christ. There is no profane writer, whose works have come down to us, that lived until more than five hundred years after that period, or about the time that Jehoshaphat reigned in Judah. Herodotus of Greece, is the oldest historian, whose writings have escaped the ruins of time. He did not flourish till more than a thousand years after the death of Moses. That father of profane history did not live until after the return of the children of Israel from Babylon. There are no writings now extant so ancient as the five books of Moses, unless the book of Job be an exception. This is conceded by many of the learned among the deists.

HEATHEN poets and historians have recorded events which reach as far back as the creation. Though they have written in a fabulous strain ; it is evident that they allude to facts which were originally taken from the history of Moses. Those writers speak of the happy state of man when he was first created ; they represent that he was placed in a delightful garden, and enjoyed all the blessings of what they call the golden age. We also find in those authors an account of the iron age, or the unhappy state of man

after he had lost his primeval innocence. Strabo, the Greek geographer, who lived in an early period of the christian era, informs that Alexander the Great, who died a little more than three hundred years before Christ, sent a person to enquire into the manners and doctrine of the Bramins, or the Hindoo priests in India. The messenger found one of that order named Calanus, who taught him, "That in the origin of nature plenty reigned through all the world. Milk, and wine, and honey, and oil flowed from fountains: but men having abused this felicity, God deprived them of it, and condemned them to labor for the sustenance of their lives." Similar representations of man's primitive innocence and happiness, of his fall, and the bitter fruits of it, have been found in the writings of many of the oriental nations, and in those of the Grecian philosophers, who borrowed their theology from the east. These accounts were evidently handed down by tradition from some of the first chapters in Genesis.

HISTORY and tradition agree with the scriptures in ascribing to mankind the same parents, or in deriving them from one pair. The differences in colour have created objections in some minds against the Mosaic account of

the propagation of the human race. This difficulty is, no doubt, the greatest that philosophy can urge. It is certain that climate has some influence upon the colour of the skin. It is a general fact that the nations who live within the torrid zone are of a darker complexion than the inhabitants of the northern temperate zone. The whites grow darker in the course of a few generations by removing into hot climates. It is well known that the Jews, from their attachment to their religion, do not blend with other nations. Experience has determined that those of them who inhabit near the equator for an age or two, are of a darker hue than their brethren who inhabit colder regions for an equal length of time. It will not follow from the influence of climate that men will be exactly of the same complexion who have, during any given period, resided within the same parallels of latitude; for the state of the atmosphere may be materially affected by high mountains in some places, the soil, and other causes. The Africans on the slave coast, which lies within the torrid zone, are not equally black. Those who are born and brought up near barren sands, are blacker than those who have been found in fertile places. The heat of the sun is much more intense on the

former soil than on the latter. The manner of living has also an effect on the complexion. Tribes who dwell in dirty, smoky cabins, or huts, are clad with the undressed skins of beasts, and feed on filthy food, are more swarthy than those nations who dwell in convenient houses, and practise cleanliness in their lodging, apparel, and diet. Hence, we may probably conclude why the American Indians have a darker skin than the descendants from the English in the same temperate climate; and why the Tartars, and others, that live at the distance of a few degrees from the north pole, are more tawny than the civilized nations that lie further to the south.

WHETHER a satisfactory solution of the difficulty to which we have been attending has been hit upon or not, there are so many particulars in which the different nations agree, as to fasten the charge of absurdity on those who deny them to be of one race, from the differences in the colour of their skin. Beside likeness of figure and organs, it has been found that men who are dissimilar in complexion are alike in the passions and appetites both of body and mind; and that by long cohabitation and similar culture the differences between them are not greater

than among those who are confessedly of one stock. The similitude between the different nations and tribes of men, is much greater than can be discerned between any two species of animals that fall under our notice. By facts which have been long accumulating, from the reports of those who have most extensively traversed this globe whether by sea or land, the evidence that mankind are all of one race has become decisive.

ALL nations, that have any records remaining, agree in tracing back the original residence of their ancestors at or near that part of Asia where scripture history places them before their dispersion. We can find no account of the origin of nations which will bear examination but that recorded in Gen. x. which concludes with the following words, *These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations : and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood.*

THE antiquity which the Chinese give to their empire, and to the creation, has long been exploded by the learned, as fabulous. The authentic annals of nations, and the state of the arts and sciences, best agree with the Mosaic chronology.

THE memory of the flood, which happened in the days of Noah, is preserved in the writings and traditions of all the oriental nations. Marks of the deluge are plainly discernible in many places. The productions of the ocean have been discovered in the center of continents, at a great distance from the sea; lodged in high mountains, and in mines and quarries that lie deep in the bowels of the earth. The face of the globe we inhabit appears to have been rent and torn by some violent convulsion. The more the surface and the interior parts of the earth have been explored, the higher is the evidence that it was once overflowed by the waters of the deluge.

THE discoveries of circumnavigators, have removed the difficulties of admitting that the earth was peopled in all parts from the plain in the land of Shinar, a little to the west of the Euphrates; on the banks of which river the terrestrial paradise stood. The art of navigation was imperfectly understood in the days of Moses, and long after. It never rose to high perfection until the polar virtue of the loadstone was known. By discovering that the magnet would point the needle in the mariner's compass to the north and south poles, with small variations, the

way was prepared to venture far from the sight of land, and to go on distant voyages. This discovery was not made till more than thirteen hundred years after Christ. Previously to that period vessels might be caught by storms, or the trade winds, and have been driven to remote islands, or to this continent. As the mariners had not the means of returning they must have remained in the places to which they were wafted. Shut out as they were from commerce, and being few in number, they would revert to the rude state in which they have been found. The peopling of this western continent, the most difficult to account for of any part of the globe, might have been effected not only by the causes just named, but by emigrations across the narrow strait that divides Asia and America. It is now known that the north east part of the former, and the north west of the latter are divided by a water passage of but a few miles in width : and that even savages are furnished with craft sufficient for transportation.

THE boast which some infidels have made of being able to overthrow the bible, by improvements in the natural and civil history of the world, and in philosophy, is wholly without foundation. Modern dis-

coveries lend their aid in establishing, rather than in overthrowing, the Mosaic history; that part of scripture history which lies at the remotest distance from us.

THE extraordinary facts narrated in the pentateuch, considered in all their circumstances, are suited to confirm its truth. In this place may be mentioned the plagues inflicted upon the Egyptians, the drying up of the water of the red sea to open a passage through its channel for the Israelites, their forty years journey in the wilderness, the manna rained down from heaven to furnish them with bread, the quails brought round their camp to afford them meat, and the water that gushed out of the rock to quench their thirst. These and similar wonders were wrought to establish the belief—That Jehovah, the God of the Hebrews, was the one only living and true God, in opposition to the polytheism, or idolatry, which reigned among all other nations at that time. Had the story of Moses been false, the enemies of the Israelites would have united in detecting the imposture; and they could not have failed of success. The known attachment of idolaters to their religion, would not have suffered them to be idle spectators of events of such importance. The facts as-

serted were of a public nature, and therefore must have been overthrown had they been false. Besides, a public appeal was made, every year, to some of the most remarkable of them, by the feast of the pass-over, and the feast of tabernacles : The former was designed as a standing memorial of the salvation of the Israelites on the night in which the first born of the Egyptians were slain ; the latter was instituted to preserve the memory of the Israelites dwelling in tents in their journey through the wilderness. Had Moses been an impostor he would not have appointed annual feasts to keep events in remembrance, which he knew never had an existence. His acknowledged sagacity must have taught him, that on every return of those occasions, inquiry would have been awakened, which soon would have proved fatal to his scheme, had it been built on fraud. His conduct had no appearance like to that of impostors ; who always attempt to hide their designs from the public eye, and to avoid scrutiny as far as possible.

ADMITTING human nature to have been the same in the days of Moses as now, would it be possible for a man to frame such a story as he delivers and obtain general belief, if the whole were a fiction ? would he presume

to say, that he went into a powerful kingdom and led out thence more than two millions of people—that the sea was opened to make a passage for them on their departure—that their enemies in the pursuit of them were drowned in the same channel through which they passed on dry ground—that the redeemed nation were afterwards led forty years in a wilderness, where they were miraculously supported from Heaven—and that in their defenceless state they were protected from their enemies, who came upon them in great numbers with arms in their hands—I say, would he have uttered such a story, in case he knew the whole to be a lie, with any expectation of being believed? Moses could not have indulged any hope of extensive or lasting credence, if his whole marvellous account were false, unless he had been a fool or a madman. The ability he discovered has cleared him from the imputation of either of these characters from the enemies of revelation.

GROUNDLESS stories, it is true, have prevailed for a time, but they have always been found to lose even their temporary credit, when neither fraud nor violence have prevented or silenced inquiry. Fond as mankind are of the marvellous, they will in a

short time correct their credulity in particular instances, if they are laid under no restraint in examination ; especially when facts so notorious as the above are appealed to as proof. Granting, as we must, that the overthrow of one delusion will not cure the human mind of a liability to be deceived again, yet nothing is more true than that the multitude will not hold to any one fable long, when the public evidence which it claims for its support is discovered to be false. Let one now rise up in this country, or in any other, with the professed design of inculcating a new creed, and appeal to facts in proof as public as were those recorded in the Mosaic writings, he would not be believed long, if the facts which he affirmed were not real ; provided neither stratagem nor force were employed to blind the eyes of the multitude, or to keep up the credit of the new religion. That the history of Moses has been generally believed, and that for a long time, by most who have been acquainted with it, is not denied by its enemies. We would ask these last, on what principle this faith can be accounted for, if the narration on which it rests be a forgery ? If Moses were either artful or tyrannical enough to keep the Israelites in the dark, he could not have enchained the minds

of the surrounding nations. The Egyptians in particular, who were at that time the most acquainted with science of any nation on the globe, would have exerted themselves to detect the imposture, had there been the least prospect of success.

No man or body of men from the earliest ages to the present day, have taken it upon them to point out the time or the place when and where the Mosaic religion was fabricated, if it be a forgery. Why has not this business been undertaken? It has not been omitted through a want of abilities for investigation in some infidels. Nor have the adversaries of the Bible withheld their efforts in the present instance, through want of hatred of Moses; for no man has been more reproached and vilified by them than he. It can easily be told when, where, and by whom, the Mahometan imposture was framed. Why, I again ask, has no one undertaken to unravel the plot of Moses, if his scheme be the offspring of fraud? The true answer is, that no man of thought and reflection has ever felt himself equal to the task. The facts of which his history is composed are too glaring to be denied.

THE Israelites cannot, with the least colour of truth, be considered as conspiring

with Moses to establish a false or a groundless story. For though their character, after they were brought under the Sinai covenant, was not so corrupt as that of other nations, it was yet far from being faultless. They are represented as a murmuring and perverse people, and very prone to idolatry. Within a short time after the law had been delivered to them from the mouth of JEHOVAH, with solemn and awful majesty, they, with Aaron at their head, formed a molten calf, and worshipped it, saying, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." While they were in the wilderness they manifested a strong inclination to return to the country where they had been in bondage, and contemplated choosing a leader to conduct them back into that land of idols. Yet perverse as that nation was, and reluctant as they were to the worship of the Lord, they have borne witness to the truth of the history given of them by Moses, and subsequent Old Testament writers. That people bear testimony to the same facts at the present time. Individuals and collective bodies of men wish to have their names handed down to posterity with honor. They shudder at the thought of a disgraceful memory. If we admit that the Israelites would lend their aid to a forgery to render themselves

the objects of reproach to their successors, we must suppose that a trait existed in their characters, which distinguished them essentially from all the rest of mankind that have lived from the creation to this day.

THE writings of Moses carry all the marks of impartiality. He not only mentions the faults of the nation, but his own faults ; and proceeds to tell the particular offence which prevented him from passing over Jordan, and leading the tribes into the land of promise. Do these things carry the marks of a dishonest mind ? Do they not extort from every candid person a confession of the integrity of Moses ?

AN objection has been brought forward against the truth and authenticity of the Pentateuch, from the passage recorded in Numbers xii. 3. *Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.* Upon these words Paine remarks, in his usual style and spirit, "If Moses said this of himself, he was a vain and arrogant coxcomb, and unworthy of credit ; and if he did not say it, the books are without authority."

To this objection it may be replied,

1st. THAT from the account given of Moses, it appears that he was a man of re-

markable meekness. He bore the insults of the people at large, and of his brother Aaron and sister Miriam, with a composure rarely to be met with even among persons of real piety. There are certainly occasions in which a man may appeal to the inoffensiveness and purity of his own character. The reproachful and cruel treatment which Moses received justifies a vindication of himself. The credibility of other historians of far less worth than he, has not been called in question from the things they have spoken in favor of themselves, when driven to make a defence against the tongue of slander.

2nd. THE text in Numb. xii. is inserted by way of parenthesis, and might have been added by some subsequent writer of the Bible. The account given of the death and burial of Moses, in the last chapter of Deuteronomy, must have been added by some other person. Samuel did not write any part of the second book which bears his name. It is not supposed that he wrote the whole of the first. In the xxvth chapter of the first book mention is made of his death. If this event be not an anticipation, but is introduced in the order or the time in which it happened, the evidence is decisive that he did not write any more of those books than the

twenty four chapters preceding. This does nothing towards destroying or weakening the truth and authenticity of those books, unless it were somewhere affirmed in the Bible, that they both and throughout were penned by Samuel. This is nowhere said. While the canon of scripture was unfinished, the succeeding writers might add to the parts which preceded. The manner of removing the difficulty urged from Numb. xii. 3, will be easily understood by a comparison. Let us suppose that in some future distant period, in a new edition of Doctor Ramsay's History of the American Revolution, it should be added in a parenthesis, or in a note, that Dr. Ramsay was a man of science, and of an estimable character, would this destroy or even weaken the credibility of his history? The application is easy to the case of Moses. Some other person inserted the eulogy upon him: which in no way affects the truth of what the deceased wrote, unless it be an additional confirmation.

I CONCLUDE this discourse with observing that the truth of the Mosaic history is supposed in all the other writings both of the Old Testament and the New. The evidence we hope to produce in favor of their truth and authenticity, will corroborate the arguments that have been brought in support of the truth of the five first books of the Bible.



DISCOURSE II.

On the Truth of the Scriptures.



2 TIMOTHY iii. 16.

ALL scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

HAVING in my first discourse, from the words just read, attended to the evidence in support of the truth of the Mo-
saic writings, I now proceed to consider the truth of the other scriptures.

THAT the Israelites once inhabited the land of Canaan is as well known, and as universally believed by all sorts of men, as any part of ancient history. Infidels have never denied this, nor that the Israelites were put into possession of that country by conquering its former inhabitants. On that conquest they have raised one of their most

formidable objections against the inspiration of the Bible. This objection I shall consider in another place. Tho' in consistency with themselves, they have rejected the account of the miracles which attended the conquest, they have admitted the narration in general which is contained in the book of Joshua, as true.

AFTER the death of Joshua followed the rule of the Judges; which was succeeded by kingly government. Towards the decline of the kingdom of Judah the history of other nations becomes more authentic, and corroborates scripture history. After the Babylonian captivity the history of the Jews is more and more connected with that of the Assyrians, the Persians, the Grecians, and other nations. The return of the Jews from Babylon happened about five hundred and thirty-six years before Christ. The account given of it by Ezra and Nehemiah, whose books the deists allow to be genuine, confirms the truth of the predictions of Jeremiah and other prophets to whom were disclosed the captivity and return of the Jews, before either of those events took place. Besides, the writings of Ezra and Nehemiah refer to all the historical books which relate to the children of Israel, from

the time of Abraham to the days in which they lived. Thus we see that the Old Testament history is established beyond all reasonable doubt.

IN whatever light infidels are disposed to consider the Jewish prophets who lived before the Babylonian captivity, in the time of it, or afterwards, they cannot deny that such persons existed, without executing a task which they have never attempted, and that is the overthrow of the whole history of the Old Testament. The prophecies and the historical books are so interwoven that they must stand or fall together.

THE difficulties which arise from the dates and numbers in the Old Testament, are not many ; and the few mistakes in these particulars are easily accounted for. It would be strange if the transcribers of the bible, a book much oftener copied than any other in the world, had in no instance erred. The Jews, as well as all the other ancient nations, made use of letters to express numbers. The figures in arithmetic, with which we are so familiarly acquainted, are not to be found in the writings of antiquity. They were first introduced into Europe from Arabia, about a thousand years after Christ. Several of the letters of the Hebrew Alphabet are very

much alike in shape. A transcriber might easily mistake one letter for another, where the similarity between them is very great. An error of this kind might make a numerical calculation very wide from the truth. The Hebrew letter which signifies 4, differs very little in its shape from the one which signifies 200; and the one which stands for 8, from the one which stands for 400. The errors in copies of the scriptures that are of the numerical kind, do nothing towards destroying the truth of these writings. It has never been contended that the transcribers or printers of the Bible, were under immediate unerring supernatural influence. Chronological errors, especially in things of small consequence, have never been considered as subversive of profane history. There is no just cause why any thing should operate as a valid objection against the truth of the scriptures, which is conceded to have no weight in setting aside the truth of any other writing. It may be fairly concluded from the perfections of God, that he will preserve the essentials of any book that has a just claim to inspiration. What need we more?

WITHOUT dwelling any longer upon the truth of the Old Testament, I shall only observe, that when it was closed by the proph-

et Malachi, about four hundred years before Christ, the Jewish church received as authentic the same books which we have now in our Bible ; and admitted no other as canonical.

As we come down to the New Testament, we fall within a more luminous period than that of Moses and the prophets.

WE are witnesses of the existence of the christian religion. However much this may have been, or is now, despised, no writer has undertaken to overthrow the belief that a person called JESUS CHRIST, made his appearance in Palestine near 1800 years ago, and that he has had followers in the world, from the time of his entrance on his public ministry down to the present day. The Roman Empire had reached its zenith, and human science had risen to a higher pitch than in any former period when Jesus was born. There are now in many hands the writings of poets, orators, and historians, who flourished a little before and a little after his birth. These authors are held in high repute by those who have a taste for the fine arts ; and the reading of them continues to form a part of a university education. Evidence can be collected from some of those eminent performances, in support of the truth of the christian scriptures.

A QUESTION may arise in this place, in some minds, which demands an answer, and that is, why the testimony of pagans is appealed to in defence of the gospel? To this it may be answered, that their testimony, is the testimony of avowed enemies; which according to common sense, and the approved rules of judging, has no small weight. The Heathens cannot be suspected of attempting to build up a cause which they have ever fought to destroy; or of aiding in the establishment of the facts on which it rests, unless compelled to it by the force of evidence. Let it also be remembered here, that the suffrages of pagan writers are not collected to prove that the scriptures are given by divine inspiration, but for the single purpose of confirming their truth.

THAT the religion of Jesus Christ did exist in as early a period as his followers contend, may be fairly gathered from the writings of Tacitus, the Roman historian, which were published about seventy years after Christ's death. Speaking of the fire which happened at Rome about thirty years after the crucifixion, and of the suspicions that the Emperor Nero enkindled it, he proceeds as follows: "But neither these exertions, nor his largesses to the people, nor his

offerings to the gods, did away the infamous imputation under which Nero lay, of having ordered the city to be set on fire. To put an end therefore to this report, he laid the guilt, and inflicted the most cruel punishments upon a set of people, who were held in abhorrence for their crimes, and called by the vulgar, *Christians*. The founder of that name was Christ, who suffered death in the reign of Tiberius, under his procurator Pontius Pilate. This pernicious superstition, thus checked for a while, broke out again; and spread, not only over Judea, where the evil originated, but through Rome also, whither every thing bad upon earth finds its way, and is practised. Some who confessed their sect were first seized, and afterwards by their information a vast multitude were apprehended, who were convicted, not so much of the crime of burning Rome, as of hatred to mankind. Their sufferings at their execution were aggravated by insult and mockery, for some were disguised in the skins of wild beasts, and worried to death by dogs—some were crucified—and others were wrapped in pitched shirts, and set on fire when the day closed, that they might serve

“ as lights to illuminate the night. Nero
 “ lent his own gardens for these executions;
 “ and exhibited at the same time a mock
 “ circensian entertainment, being a specta-
 “ tor of the whole in the dress of a chari-
 “ oteer, sometimes mingling with the crowd
 “ on foot, and sometimes viewing the spec-
 “ tacles from his car. This conduct made
 “ the sufferers pitied ; and tho’ they were
 “ criminals, and deserved the severest pun-
 “ ishment, yet they were considered as sac-
 “ rificed, not so much out of a regard to
 “ the public good, as to gratify the cruelty
 “ of one man.”*

THAT Tacitus was a bitter enemy to the
 christian religion no one can doubt who has
 attended to the foregoing passage. It will
 follow of course that this learned pagan ad-
 versary, would have rejoiced at an opportu-
 nity to have proved it to be a fable, had it
 been possible. His testimony in support of
 some of the principal facts on which it rests,
 could have been extorted by nothing but ir-
 resistible evidence. We observe that he tes-
 tifies that there was such a person as Christ,
 that he suffered death in the reign of Tibe-
 rius, and under the particular government

* Paley's view of the Evidences of Christianity, Boston
 Edition, pages 33, 34.

of Pilate. He also confirms the account given in the New Testament of the temporary check of the prevalence of the gospel, of the spread of it afterwards in Judea, the original or first spot where it was propagated, and of its extending its influence to Rome; where a christian church was gathered in the same age in which Christ was crucified.

To the testimony of Tacitus might be added that of several other pagan writers. I shall only add that of Pliny the younger, the Roman Governor of Bythynia and Pontus, places remote from the capital. His famous letter to Trajan the Emperor, was written about the same time with the passage adduced from Tacitus; but relates to the affairs of his own time. He speaks of the christian religion, as a religion well known, and as having made very extensive progress in the places under his immediate government. Speaking of the christians, he says, "There are many of every age, and of both sexes—nor has the contagion of this superstition seized cities only, but smaller towns also, and the open country."*

PLINY in the same letter mentions the worship of the christians, and gives explicit

* Paley's view, p. 36.

testimony to the purity of their morals. He writes, "That having examined the christians, setting aside the superstition of their way, he could find no fault; and that this was the sum of their error, that they were wont to meet on a fixed day, before light, and sing a hymn to Christ as God, and to bind themselves by a solemn oath or sacrament, not to any wicked purpose; but not to steal, nor rob, nor commit adultery, nor break their faith, nor detain the pledge."

It is natural to inquire what testimony has been given to the appearing of Jesus Christ, and the progress of his religion, by the Jewish nation, from which he descended as a man. According to the Evangelists Christ's personal ministry was almost wholly confined to that people, and by their influence he was condemned to die. It is certain that the Jews ever since the coming of Jesus of Nazareth into the world, have admitted that he was born in the days of Herod the great—that he entered upon his public ministry in Judea—that he did many wonderful things—that he gained a number of disciples—that by the instigation of their rulers he was put to death—that according to the report of his followers he was restored

to life on the third day after his crucifixion—and that his religion had an early and extensive spread. The body of the Jewish nation did not receive him as the Messiah ; for they expected, and still expect, a temporal prince under that character. They believed, in the days in which Jesus appeared, that if he were the promised Shiloh, he would have brought them out from under the Roman yoke, and have raised their nation to the summit of earthly glory. The Saviour whom christians acknowledge, declared, both by words and actions, that his kingdom is not of this world ; and condemned in a pointed manner, the reigning corruptions in the faith and practice of the Jews. They rejected this illustrious messenger of the Lord of hosts, they charged him with casting out devils by Beelzebub the prince of devils, and pursued him with implacable malice and rancour until they had brought him to the cross. We are not therefore to expect honorable mention of Jesus Christ or of his religion by them. Some indeed of the modern Jews acknowledge that the christian Messiah inculcated many good moral precepts, and justly reproach many of his professed followers with a total want of his spirit ; but they consider him still as an im-

postor. On the whole, we can collect as much evidence from the Jewish nation in favor of the early existence of the christian religion, as could under all circumstances be expected; allowing it to be true.

WHEN we recur to the whole series of christian writers, from the beginning of the christian institution down to the present time, we find that they all proceed upon the general account, which is contained in our scriptures, and upon no other. The ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and the Sabbath, have been kept up in the christian church from the time of the Apostles to the day in which we live. The few exceptions found among small and temporary sects of christians, do not affect the general argument, or the usage of the church at large. The foregoing rites considered in this connexion, afford no small proof of the facts which they recognize; such as the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, as set forth in the history of the New Testament. We justly consider the declaration of the Independence of the United States of America, as a great and memorable event. Should the day on which it was declared, be marked with peculiar public tokens of respect from generation to generation, will

not evidence be fairly collected hundreds of years hence, by those who shall then live, that the political birth of our republic happened on the 4th of July 1776? The application to the subject which this supposition is designed to illustrate, is too plain to be misunderstood.

IN further confirmation of the truth and authenticity of the books of the New Testament, we find the four gospels written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and the Acts of the Apostles, are quoted, or plainly alluded to, by a succession of christian writers, beginning with those who lived in the same age with the Apostles, and continuing through all the subsequent periods to the present time. By the works of those writers it appears that the story of the birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection of Christ, and the effects that soon followed, was the same from the first as now. Quotations from the early ages of the christian church, have been made from the Epistles as well as from the historical books of the New Testament. Whoever receives the historical books as authentic and genuine, cannot justly doubt concerning the Epistles; for the latter proceed on the supposition of the truth of the former: as must appear to

every one who attentively reads the New Testament. Its historical books are quoted, or plainly alluded to, by Barnabas, Clement of Rome, Hermas, Ignatius, and Polycarp, as we find by their writings that have come down to us. Those fathers, as is generally admitted, were cotemporary with the Apostles, and were the hearers and companions of some one or more of the twelve. In the second century from the birth of Christ, we collect testimony of the kind now under consideration from the writings of Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Theophilus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian. In the third century, quotations from, and references to, the New Testament, are numerous in the christian writers of that period: among whom are to be enumerated Origen, Dionysius, and Cyprian. As we advance far into the fourth century, we find the books written by christians to be as full of scripture passages, as the printed sermons of modern divines; it is therefore unnecessary to name any more christian writers under this head. If we be satisfied by the testimonies in support of the truth and authenticity of the New Testament, that can be adduced from the first three centuries, we shall find nothing to perplex our belief in the ages that have followed.

THE force of the testimony which has been brought, is greatly strengthened by the agreement of the several writers with each other, in their references to the books of the New Testament. They also refer to those books as clothed with *divine* authority, and consider the scriptures as the *only* writings which are given by inspiration of God. If it should be said that the writers of the second century were kept from contradicting themselves, or others, in quoting from the New Testament, by attending to the quotations made by the writers of the first century, and that the writers of the third century observed the same precaution it may be observed. 1st. That such an agreement in a forgery, if the gospel be false, among such numbers, in places so remote from each other, and for three hundred years, is without a parallel in the annals of mankind; and since no miraculous evidence is appealed to for the proof of such an unprecedented fact, the objection has no weight. 2d. The christian writers of the first century lived in countries remote from each other. Clement flourished at Rome, Ignatius at Antioch, and Polycarp at Smyrna.

THE identity or sameness of the christian story, in every age since it was first promul-

gated, may be fairly concluded from the early collection of the books of the New Testament into a distinct volume, and the use that was made of them. They were publicly read and expounded in the religious assemblies of the christians who lived in the early ages. Commentaries were written upon them; and they were translated into different languages. Attempts were also made in the infancy of the christian church, to reconcile with each other the different accounts of the four evangelists, as recorded in the copy which we have in our hands.

THE use that was made of the New Testament, in the controversies that arose early in the christian church, tends to the confirmation of the subject we are now considering. The several parties appealed to the same writings for proof of their respective opinions. Most even of the heretics acknowledged the whole of the New Testament; and the few who did not, received the greater part of it as true, and of divine original. It is easy to see that the different opinionists who had a respect for the same scriptures, to which they had equal access, would serve as a check upon each other, against attempting any alteration of those writings, had they been so disposed. We argue with certainty in this

case, because we build upon the known feelings of human nature. To render the matter plain, let us come down to controversies among christians with which we are acquainted. Should the Presbyterians attempt an alteration of those texts which the Episcopalians employ in support of their cause, the latter would not fail to detect and expose the fraud. The same remark may be made with respect to the vigilance of the Presbyterians, in case the Episcopalians were guilty of the like fraudulent conduct. Were the Pedobaptists, or those who hold to infant Baptism, to add to, or diminish from, the words in the Bible, on which the controversy between them and the Baptists turn, the latter would hold up the designed deception to the world. Were the Baptists to alter the disputed passages, the Pedobaptists would expose the forgery, or erasement. What ever evils have flown from the divisions in the christian church, we discern that good has come out of them in this one respect at least—The preservation of the sacred volume from being corrupted.

In this connexion we may see, that a satisfactory answer can be given to the following inquiry, which we sometimes hear, “ How shall illiterate people know that the

“ present copies of the Bible, in the original
 “ tongues in which they were written, or
 “ in the translation which they have are just?
 “ As they have no knowledge of those an-
 “ cient languages, how do they know but
 “ that they are deceived about the text?”

To this it may be replied—that persons who are unacquainted with the languages in which the scriptures were first written, have no just cause to fear that any material errors have crept into the Hebrew or Greek copies, or into their translations; because learned men of various denominations, and who are, some of them, very wide apart in sentiment, appeal to the same scriptures in their original tongues; and constantly serve as spies upon each other against any alteration of moment, either in the transcribing or translating of them. The present translation of the Bible into our language, is acknowledged by learned men of different denominations, to be done with great judgment and impartiality. The few who have wished to raise an outcry against it, have not been highly respected by christians in general, for their attachment to revealed religion. The present translation was finished almost two hundred years ago.

It is indeed true that a knowledge of the languages in which the scriptures were first

written, will be helpful in understanding them; because the translators were not wholly clear from mistakes; and more especially because there are idioms in every language, or peculiar forms of speech, that cannot be completely expressed in any other. But the Bible is so translated, that no one will be led into any material error by the present version.

RETURNING from digression, I proceed to observe that the same historical books of the New Testament, which we have in our hands, were early attacked by the adversaries of our religion; as by Celsus, in the second century, Porphyry, in the third, and Julian the apostate, in the fourth. These learned pagans do not hint at any other histories as received among christians, concerning the life, ministry, death, and resurrection, of Jesus Christ, and the propagation of his religion, but those contained in the four Evangelists, and in the Acts of the Apostles. Their violent enmity to the christian religion, would have led them to destroy or weaken the authenticity of the books which its friends received, had it been in their power. As they never attempted this, but built their objections on the same books

which are contained in our copies, the evidence is conclusive that the historical records to which christians appealed then, were the same which we now have.

To the foregoing arguments may be added—that many formal catalogues of authentic scriptures were published within four hundred years from the birth of Christ, by his followers, which contain all the books both of the Old and New Testament, that are received by christians, as canonical at the present time.

It is well known to all who have gone far into the inquiry concerning the truth and authenticity of the New Testament, that many spurious or apocryphal writings appeared in some of the early ages of christianity, under the names of the Evangelists, Apostles, and other persons. Such fictions may be accounted for, from the fondness of the human mind to enlarge on a marvellous story that had begun to engage general attention in many places, and from lucrative motives. We have certain proof that those forgeries were never received by the christian church as canonical. They did not appear in the first century from the birth of Christ; in which all the historical books of the New Testament were universally known.

and received by christians. Primitive christians never appear to have had any doubt concerning the truth and genuineness of the four Evangelists, and the Acts of the Apostles, which contain the principal facts on which the gospel rests. Of the apocryphal writings few have been preserved entire to the present time. From these, as well as from the fragments of the rest to be collected from other writers, those spurious productions, the most of them, are discovered to be full of trifling, silly stories and contradictions, and to be composed in a very different style from the books which christians receive. It is however apparent from all those forgeries, that they allude to the same general history of Christ and his Apostles which is contained in the New Testament. None of the apocryphal writings were ever admitted into the same volume with the canonical books, nor into the catalogues of authentic scripture that have been published. They were not noticed by the adversaries of the christian religion in its infancy, nor were they appealed to, as an authority, by any of the ancient christian writers, in their controversies with each other.*

* The reader who wishes to go into a full examination of the truth and authenticity of the New Testament, is referred to the authorities which have principally guided the

THE differences in the accounts given by the Evangelists concerning the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ create no objection to the truth of their history. Some circumstances are mentioned by one Evangelist which are omitted by another ; but on examination it is found that they are all consistent with the general story, and with each other. Differences in history are not necessarily considered as contradictions. Two or more writers on the American Revolution, may mention different facts, and yet their narrations may be harmonious. The genealogies of Christ given by Matthew and Luke are different ; but they are reconciled with truth, by considering that Matthew gives the genealogy of Christ in the line of Joseph his reputed father, and Luke traces it in the line of Mary his real mother. The differences in the accounts given by the Evangelists of the Resurrection of Christ, are reconcileable with each other.

THE evidence of the truth of the historians of the New Testament is greater, than if they all had mentioned the same facts and

writer of these discourses, on that subject, viz. Jones's new and full method of settling the canonical authority of the New Testament, and Paley's view of the Evidences of Christianity. The author regrets that he has not had access to Lardner's Credibility of the gospel history.

no other. In that case it might have been objected with more appearance of plausibility, that they wrote in concert with a design to make out one story, to impose on mankind. When a number of witnesses testify to a complicated fact, before a court of justice, precisely in the same words and with the same circumstances, a suspicion more easily arises in the minds of the Judges, of collusion and fraud in the persons who give testimony, than when they employ different words, and bring up different circumstances that are reconcileable with the general fact, and with each other, and cast light upon the whole affair.

If any will be so absurd as to discredit the Evangelists because they narrate events that happened long ago, they must, to be consistent reject all ancient history. They must disbelieve that there ever were such men as Cyrus, Alexander the great, or Julius Cesar; for if their existence be admitted, credit must be given to some of the records of ancient times. We all admit many things to be true of which we have not been eye-witnesses, on human testimony. If the witnesses be credible, we do not withhold our assent to what they testify, because the facts they affirm happened at a time, or in a place, re-

mote from us. If we will allow nothing to be true that has not been immediately addressed to our senses, our knowledge will be confined within very narrow bounds indeed.—We of this audience, on that supposition, ought not to believe that there are such places as London, Paris, or Amsterdam; for we have not beheld them with our own eyes.

INFIDELS, in some of their objections against the Bible, have fallen into modes of reasoning relative to facts, which they would be ashamed to adopt when applied to any other subject. Hence, we have grounds to suspect that they are governed by a wish to prove the scriptures to be false, rather than by the candor which they profess to take for their guide. They urge the supernatural events narrated in sacred history as a sufficient bar against admitting its truth. Mr. Hume, a deist of great subtilty, has labored to prove that experience is the only guide, to be relied on, in reasoning concerning matters of fact. If he mean by experience, what falls under each man's particular observation, he must go all the absurd lengths of discrediting the existence of every thing which is not known either by the immediate testimony of the external senses, or the

immediate perceptions of the mind. If Mr. Hume acted upon his own scheme in the sense in which it is now taken, he certainly did not believe in any part of ancient history, except in things daily occurring; such as the rising and setting of the sun, the ebbing and flowing of the tide, the change of the seasons, &c. Nor did he expect that the readers of his history of England, would give credit to a large part of it, unless governed by the credulity which he explodes. If by experience he meant the usual course of events, it will follow that no report which relates to an uncommon event ought to be believed. On this hypothesis, we have no sufficient grounds to believe that King Charles I. of England, was beheaded in the year 1649, or that Louis XVI. of France lost his life on the scaffold in 1793. It has not been usual for kings to lose their lives by the hand of the executioner, after the formalities of a law trial; and as we were not present when either of those monarchs is said to have had his head struck off, we are justified in rejecting the report as a fable. Such absurd consequences as these will follow from the principles laid down by the most subtle deists, for the purpose of destroying the credibility of miracles. If the existence of these is inadmissible, the Bible

must be renounced as given by divine inspiration

THE portion of understanding which is so equally distributed among mankind, is fully competent to decide on the evidence derived from facts which take place before their eyes. None of the intricacies of abstract reasoning are needed in such cases. This remark agrees with the known sense of all judicial bodies on the earth. To the same common sense I appeal, whether the Apostles and other witnesses of the facts recorded in the history of the New Testament, were not competent judges of the truth of what they assert? If they were, their testimony is to be received as valid; unless it can be set aside from something that appears in their characters, or in the circumstances which attend their narration. No just objection can arise from either of these quarters, when we candidly attend to the case. The truth of the scriptures is fully established by admitting, as all men do when not bewildered by sophistry or prejudice, that credible human testimony is the sole criterion of the truth of facts otherwise unknown. By this plain and approved standard, we are willing that the truth of the scriptures should be tried—We need not fear the result.

THE candor and impartiality of the writers of the New Testament, are too manifest to be denied. They narrate their own faults, without endeavoring to palliate them. This exonerates them from the charge of attempting to impose a forgery on the world. To this they had no inducement. The religion they published condemns falsehood in the strongest terms, and dooms liars and deceivers, in particular, to eternal misery. But had they been so hardened, as to have been in no fear from the judgment to come, they had no temporal inducement to support their zeal for the propagation of the gospel: for by becoming the open advocates of it, they had to renounce the pleasures, the riches, and the honors, of the world, and exposed themselves to meet death in its most dreadful forms. But after all, had they been disposed to deceive mankind with a false story, it would have been wholly impracticable under the existing circumstances. They published their history on the scene of action—they appealed to public facts—and they made the appeal while the facts were recent. Their enemies, who had both knowledge and power, would have unveiled the plot, had their scheme been built on a lie. The rulers of the Jewish nation were, as a body, wholly opposed to christianity, and would have

crushed it in the birth had their malice been able to have accomplished its wishes. Had the religion of Jesus been a fraud, it would soon, like other frauds that are detested by those in power, have perished from the earth. We are not to confine the scene to Judea, where christianity was first displayed, it was carried into the lesser Asia, into Greece and Rome and other places, within a few years after the death of its founder. The malice, the learning, and the prejudices of Heathens as well as Jews were exerted against it. Its propagation was not in dark and obscure places, but in the most noted places then in the world. It was too in the day when the famous Roman Empire had brought not only Judea, but all countries of much renown, to bow to her arms, and to pour their riches into her treasury. At the same time that she extended her sceptre over the world, she reigned mistress of the arts. “ At the
“ time when Christ appeared, the Roman
“ Empire had reached the very meridian
“ of its glory. It was the illustrious peri-
“ od, when power and policy receiving aid
“ from learning and science, and embellish-
“ ment from the orators and the poets,
“ gave law to the world, directed its taste,
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“ on every subject that was supposed to be
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 “ er in the natural or in the intellectual
 “ world. It was, in short, such an age
 “ as imposture must have found in every
 “ respect the least auspicious to its designs ;
 “ especially such an imposture as christian-
 “ ity, if it had deserved the name.”*

THE first planting of the gospel in the world, and its prevalence for so long a time, under all the attending circumstances, if it were a forgery, would be a greater miracle, than any it claims for its support ; and would be without a parallel in the history of mankind.

* White's Sermons, containing a view of Christianity and Mahometanism, in their History, their Evidence, and their Effects, p. 133, 134.

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DISCOURSE III.

The sense in which all Scripture is given by Inspiration of God explained; and the evidence of its divine original from the nature of the religion which it contains considered.



2 TIMOTHY iii. 16.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

IN the two former discourses from the text, we have attended to the truth of the scriptures of the Old and New Testament. I now proceed,

II. To explain in what sense the phrase *Inspiration of God*, is to be understood when applied to *all scripture*.

By *inspiration* is to be understood, either an immediate communication of facts or doctrines from God, to the minds of the men who were employed in delivering the Bible to mankind, or in directing them what to write, or in securing them from error. They had facts and doctrines communicated to them immediately from God, in some instances, as much as if it were now communicated to us what is transacting, this moment, at the distance of thousands of miles from us. Whenever they wrote any part of scripture they were directed from on High what to record, and at the same time they were secured from error in what they wrote to guide the faith and the practice of mankind. That part of scripture which does not fall under inspiration in the first sense that has been given, falls under it in the two last senses ; and hence it may be said with strict propriety, *that all scripture is given by inspiration of God*, and forms an infallible rule of faith and practice.

THE meaning of inspiration first given, will be easily understood by a few examples. To Noah was immediately revealed that a deluge would come upon the earth—To Abraham, that his seed should be afflicted by a people in whose land they should be a

stranger, four hundred years—To Moses, the deliverance of the Israelites from their Egyptian bondage by his hand—To Samuel, the overthrow of Saul, and the establishment of David on the throne of Israel—To Jeremiah, the seventy years captivity of the kingdom of Judah—To Paul, the Antichristian apostacy—And to John, the duration of the reign of the man of sin, and the principal events relative to the church to the end of the world. Inspiration, in this high sense, is not only employed in revealing facts but doctrines; such as the mode of the divine existence, the character and offices of Jesus Christ, the immortality of the soul, the future judgment, and the resurrection of the dead. Under this head may also be ranked positive precepts, or institutions; whether binding on the Jewish or the christian church.

THOSE who acknowledge the existence of God, will not deny the possibility of his communicating truth to the human mind in this extraordinary manner; whether by visions, by an audible voice, or in any other way. No person demands credit from others, as having such immediate intercourse with the Deity, unless he evidence his illumination by means as extraordinary as the

way in which he received his knowledge. Hence, we may see the importance of miracles to confirm the divine original of the Bible; as will hereafter be considered. We may be under as real obligation to receive as divine what is revealed immediately to others, as tho' it were revealed in the same way to us. The evidence that God hath commissioned others to speak in his name may be so conclusive, as to leave us without excuse in unbelief. Whether the Most High speak to us without, or through, the instrumentality of creatures, his voice is the same, and his authority is equally binding. His right to be obeyed is not founded on the manner of communicating his will, but in his nature, and in our relation to him. Whenever we have certain proof set before us, that the righteous Lord of heaven and earth commands our faith or obedience, we are forbidden to withhold our homage a single moment.

In defining inspiration it was observed, in the second place, that the men who penned the scriptures were directed by God what to write. I need make no exception here for such instances as that of Baruch, and others, employed by the inspired men as scribes; because these last were the mere

organs of the men who took them into their service, and pronounced the words which they wrote. If the Prophets, Evangelists, or Apostles, were, in any instance left to their own discretion what to record in the scriptures, these writings could not, with any propriety, be considered throughout as given by inspiration of God ; as Paul declares in the text. Besides, if the inspired men were, in any instance, left to their own discretion what to insert in the Bible, we might mutilate it to such a degree, as to render it a very unmeaning book. This has actually been done by some nominal christians. They have professed to believe in the facts and doctrines immediately revealed from heaven ; but have considered the subsequent building upon them in the scriptures, as the opinions of fallible men. By treating the sacred volume in this manner, they have brought it down to speak a language which gives very little offence to open infidels. The approach of the former class of persons to the latter is so near, as to render the difference scarcely discernible ; and paves the way for their complete union.

IN perfect consistency with what has been said, it is admitted, that the Prophets, the

Evangelists, and the Apostles, might have a knowledge of many things inserted in the canon, by their own observation, and the accounts given them by other men. The revelations made to the patriarchs, and the facts handed down from one generation to another, probably were the sources through which Moses was furnished with matter for the book of Genesis. At the same time he was directed by omniscience what to record. This superintending influence of the Holy Ghost, gave the same authority to what he wrote, as tho' it had been immediately communicated to his mind.

THE third sense in which inspiration is taken, and that is, securing the sacred penmen from error in what they wrote, is as necessary, as the former ones, to give to the scriptures the divine authority which they claim, in every thing that relates to our religious faith and practice. Whatever doctrines or laws may be supposed to have been given by the Most High, we can have no satisfactory evidence of their divine original, if the men who are said to have recorded them, were not secured from error in committing them to writing.

It may be observed here, that the infallibility of the scriptures is confined to the re-

ligious instruction which they contain. As they were revealed as much for the benefit of the unlearned as the learned, they are not employed in teaching human science, or in correcting errors relative to it. Matters of this kind are but incidentally mentioned, and always for moral purposes. It is wholly foreign to their design to decide on the disputes in natural philosophy or astronomy. They leave these, and similar things, as they find them. They, for instance, speak of the rising and the setting of the sun, in a stile which is familiar to all mankind, and in the same manner which is used, even by those who have gone farthest in the study of the kingdom of nature, at the present day.

It is not contended that the persons who were inspired to write the Bible, were free from sin or error, considered as *men*; for their faults and mistakes stand on the sacred pages. Even a meek Moses offended, during the abode of the Israelites at Kadesh, when he said to them, "must *we* fetch you water out of this rock?" David, who wrote most of the Psalms, committed an atrocious crime in the matter of Uriah. Peter denied his Lord and Master, and at the same time horribly transgressed the third commandment. The other inspired men said

and did enough to convince all who have read their history, that they were men of like passions with others. But, as they were under *the immediate or superintending influence of inspiration*, they uttered nothing but what is true; either as matter of fact, or doctrine, or warning, or promise, or threatening, or is, in some way, related to the design of the author of the scriptures, in giving them to the human race. The sacred penmen declared facts when they told their own sins. The evangelists are to be credited, when they inform of the disputes among the Apostles, who should be the greatest in the Messiah's kingdom, and of their ignorance of its nature. It is as really the design of the Holy Spirit to have the sins, the follies, and the ignorance, of pious men, exposed, whether inspired or not, as to have doctrines and precepts recorded. It will appear, by a little reflexion, that those blemishes may be improved to enforce the reproof and the correction named in the text. When we see a Moses, a David, and a Peter, offend, is not the warning of the Apostle highly enforced, *Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall?*

THE words and actions of Satan and wicked men are recorded in the scriptures;

to lay open their characters, to justify God in punishing, and to warn against traveling in the path of his enemies. It is declared of the devil, "That he was a murderer from the beginning; and that he is a liar, and the father of it." We find this character exemplified in the history which is given of him. He came with the malicious design of a murderer, to our mother Eve, and with a lie in his mouth, when he said, *ye shall not surely die*. This first lie that was ever told in our world, has often been repeated since; and the tempter still continues to attempt the ruin of the human race by fraud and malice. Is there a false, subtle, a malicious, and a potent, enemy to mankind, constantly going about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour? And is it not worthy of divine wisdom and goodness, to apprise and warn the human race of his destructive design? How can this be done, without giving to us some knowledge of the disposition of the adversary, and the evils he has introduced? It was certainly a high proof of the benevolence and mercy of Christ, when he said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."

WE have set before us the character of the wicked generation that lived in Noah's time, in Abraham's, and in subsequent ages previous to the coming of Christ, and since ; to illustrate the depravity of the human heart, to proclaim the righteousness of God in taking vengeance, and to display the riches of his grace towards the saved. We are moreover warned by such representations against trusting in man, and are counselled to put our trust in the living God. Particular examples of wickedness in persons of different ranks and stations, and some of them under the best external advantages, or under the most solemn admonitions, are adapted to convince us of the obstinacy of sinners, and that the change which is wrought in the renewed is effected by the sovereign mercy of God. A hardened Pharaoh, a blaspheming Rabshakeh, a proud Nebuchadnezzar, a cruel Herod, and a treacherous Judas, stand as so many beacons, to reprove and warn mankind. It is as worthy of infinite truth and purity to delineate such characters, as those of a meek Moses, a pious Hezekiah, a faithful Daniel, a believing Simeon, and an amiable John. When we behold ourselves compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, as sacred history points out to us, we have every inducement

to lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and to run with patience the christian race.

If any will go about to vilify the scriptures, because they contain an account of the corruptions of the human race, they betray great ignorance and wickedness. Such representations as the Bible contains on this subject, are so far from fixing a stain on the character of Jehovah, that, in the connexion in which they stand, they paint his hatred of sin in the most glaring colours. No person of an honest heart, and who is tolerably acquainted with the sacred writings, can long remain at a loss-what things are held up in them to be imitated, and what to be avoided. The scriptures collectively may be stiled *The Word of the Lord*, as they inform us, what the Lord directs us to believe, what to practise, and what to shun. Their general design is the same; whether they are delivered in the form of doctrine, precept, or history.

A LARGE proportion of the Bible is historical. This form of writing is well suited to engage the mind of the reader, as it communicates instruction in a pleasing manner. Of the truth of this every one may be convinced, by reflecting on the effects which he

perceives from listening to an interesting story. Who can avoid being moved in reading the life of Joseph ; the preservation of Moses when exposed on the banks of the river of Egypt, in his infancy ; the life of Elijah, and others. The accounts which are given of particular persons in scripture, are not designed to amuse, like a romance ; but to afford moral and religious instruction. The history of the birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, of Jesus Christ, comprises events of greater magnitude, and higher importance, than any other that have been published in this world.

SCRIPTURE history confirms the truth of the prophecies, by conducting us to the fulfilment of many of them. It unfolds the happy tendency of piety and virtue, and the misery that is derived from sin. By the history of the Jewish nation, in particular, are exhibited the effects of obedience, and of disobedience, as they respect communities. Peculiar as was the form of government under which that people were placed, important instructions are given by the divine conduct towards them, to all mankind. The rise and fall of heathen empires, narrated in the sacred writings, proclaim the doctrine of divine providence ; and announce,

that however nations may be lifted up with their conquests and prosperity, they will, sooner or later, have their reckoning day. The Lord will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.

THE long lists of names which are found in several of the scripture books, are not without use. Among the several purposes answered by the insertion of those catalogues, the two following are obvious, and important : the one is, to confirm the descent of all nations from Shem, Ham, and Japheth ; the other is, to evince that Christ, as concerning the flesh, descended from Abraham, in the line of Isaac and Jacob, the tribe of Judah, and the house of David, agreeably to prediction and promise.

MANY of the common affairs and occurrences of life are recorded in the Bible. Were all these excluded, we should not have evidence, at least in its present degree, that the sacred volume was designed for the use of mankind. It describes them not only with respect to their moral state, and future destination, but in their various concerns with the present world. Our race, for instance, are represented in the scriptures, as

having need of food for sustenance, and raiment for clothing, so long as they remain on the earth. The necessity of these is not diminished by possessing the spirit of piety, or of inspiration. God enjoins in his word a temperate and charitable use of worldly goods, but he doth not require that abstraction from them of the living, which can be found only among those who are lodged in the grave. All temporal enjoyments, including natural life, are to be given up, and literally to be parted with, rather than deny Christ. At the same time it is to be observed, that the sacrifices which are made of earthly blessings to indulge a capricious sanctimony, are not the fruits of evangelical love, but the offspring of pride. Religionists have appeared under the christian name, who have represented the perfection of piety as very much consisting in "neglecting of the body," and in "abstaining from meats which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them who believe and know the truth." The Apostle Paul in writing for the cloak that he left at Troas, for the books, and the parchments, shows, that as a man he had the same wants, and might be benefitted by the same outward conveniences, as other men. The insertion of this passage in the scriptures, as well as of other

incidents of a like kind, does not appear trifling, after what has been said on the propriety of introducing in the Bible the common affairs of life. It is as really the mind of the author of that sacred book, that such things should be incidentally inserted, as those that were immediately revealed from on high.

THERE are some things which the scriptures declare to be lawful, that may not be expedient under certain circumstances. To a case of that kind the Apostle Paul refers in 1 Cor. vii. 6. *But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment.* Under the head of expediency is also to be placed the advice of the Apostle in the 25th verse of the same chapter, *Now concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord; yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.* The Apostle is here considering whether it were eligible for christians to marry while suffering persecution, as they were when he wrote this epistle. He gives it as his opinion that it would be better for them to remain in a state of celibacy. He leaves it, however, with individuals to determine for themselves. As God hath, by a perpetual law, authorized marriage between the sexes, without the forbid-

den degrees of consanguinity, and where nothing with respect to character forbids, the Apostle could not be commissioned to deliver a prohibitory precept in the present instance. To the Corinthians, who had written to him to inquire whether it were proper that marriages should go on as usual among their members, it was of no less importance to be informed what was left to individual choice, than to know what was positively binding on all in other things. The whole church of Christ is as really instructed by the text under consideration as by any other. Besides, it is foretold in 1 Tim. iv. that, among the apostates in the latter times, there should rise up those who would *forbid to marry*. This prediction has been verified by the decrees of the church of Rome, and of some other nominal christians. The event has therefore shown the importance of a scripture passage, in which an Apostle declares that God never prohibited marriage in times of persecution; but that even in such seasons he has left it to the judgment of individual christians, whether to enter into the matrimonial bond or not. If the foregoing remarks be just, it will follow, that the text in question was inserted in the Bible by the superintending influence of the spirit of inspiration.

WHEN the Apostle says in the beginning of the 12th verse, *But to the rest speak I, not the Lord*, his meaning apparently is, that he was going to deliver something to guide the practice of the church, which had not been before particularly revealed: It is for this reason he declares, “*speak I, not the Lord.*” That he is so to be understood, appears from the words which immediately follow in the 12th and 13th verses compared with the 10th and 11th verses. The passages which stand next in order to the clause already cited, are, *If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.* On the conversion of a husband, or a wife, from heathenism to christianity, a question naturally arose, whether the believer was to renounce matrimonial connexion with his or her unbelieving correlate, as the Jews who had married idolatrous wives, were commanded to do, in the days of Ezra. The Apostle forbids divorces on that ground; and the prohibition that he delivers, appears to be clothed with the same divine authority as the one named in the 10th and 11th verses, which contain the follow-

ing words, *And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord. Let not the wife depart from her husband: But, and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.* In this last quotation, the words "not I, but the *Lord*," refer to what Christ had before spoken on the subject of divorce, recorded in Matthew v. 32, and xix. 9. Mark x. 11, 12. Luke xvi. 18. With the thoughts kept in mind which have been suggested in answer to the difficulties, which have arisen from some parts of the seventh chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthian church, it will, I apprehend, be easy to maintain that the whole chapter claims a place in the inspired volume, as much as any other. If the original penmen of the Bible were, in any instance, left to their own discretion what to insert, it will be impossible to defend against infidels, that *all scripture* is given by inspiration of God, as is affirmed in the text. The Prophets, the Evangelists, and the Apostles, when their matter was immediately revealed from on high, or when it was received in other ways, were guided by the Holy Ghost what to write, and were secured from error in writing. I proceed,

III. To bring arguments to prove that all scripture is given by inspiration of God.

THE *first* argument may be taken from the nature of the religion contained in the Bible. In this book the Deity is represented as a spirit, possessed of an eternal, underived, and independent existence ; as being every where present at one and the same time ; as being infinite in knowledge, and in power, and in every other attribute that is necessary to constitute absolute greatness. JEHOVAH, the God whom christians adore, is not only infinitely great, but infinitely good—He is love. He is the rock, his work is perfect ; for all his ways are judgment : a God of truth, and without iniquity ; just and right is he. He is the LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. By the word of the LORD were the heavens made ; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap ; he layeth up the depth in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD ; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him : for he spake, and it was done, he commanded, and it stood fast. He made the world, and all things therein. He hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.

In Him all creatures live, and move, and have their being. The counsel of the Lord standeth forever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations. The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens ; and his kingdom ruleth over all. The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens. Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south ; but God is the Judge : he putteth down one, and setteth up another. The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. He is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. He is the one Lawgiver, who is able to save, and to destroy. He hath opened a door of hope to a sinful world through Jesus Christ. By his spirit he forms the hearts of sinners to holiness, and prepares them for eternal glory. He is the Judge of all the earth, and will render righteous retribution to all intelligent accountable creatures, forever.* Doth not such a God deserve the devout and thankful homage of man's heart ? " O come, let us worship and bow down : let us kneel before

* 1 John iv. 16. Deut. xxxii. 4. Exod. xxxiv. 6. Psalm xxxiii. 6—9. Acts xvii. 24, 26. Psalm ciii. 19. cxiii. 4. lxxv. 6, 7. Dan. iv. 17. 1 Tim. vi. 15. James iv. 12, and many other places.

the LORD our Maker! For the LORD is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods."

THE moral law, delivered from Mount Sinai, consists of ten precepts; the four first of which point out our duty to God, and the six last our duty to mankind. The sum of the whole is, to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our strength, and with all our mind; and our neighbor as ourselves. The spirit of this law was binding on man from the creation, and every one of its precepts will remain obligatory upon him for ever. What can be more reasonable than that an intelligent creature be required to place his supreme affections upon that infinite Being, who gave birth to him and all things around him? And preserves and governs his workmanship, and is the sum of perfection and blessedness? The other branch of the moral law, which respects our neighbor, is built upon truth and equity. The portion of rational moral existence in our fellow-creatures is of as much worth as ours, and deserves the same regard. Besides, it must follow from our social nature, and the necessity of its indulgence for our happiness, that if we are strangers to holy love, we

cannot enjoy society in perfection, or have any of its pleasures long continued to us.

A CODE of laws was given to the Jews, beside the ten commandments, respecting their peculiar government and worship, which was designed to last only until the time of reformation, or the establishment of the New Testament worship ; when also the lamp of divine truth was to be carried, as we have seen to the Gentile nations. The peculiar institutions given to the Israelites under the Mosaic economy, were partly adapted to their uncultivated state : such, for instance, was that of the cities of refuge, to provide for the security of those who might undesignedly take away the life of any person. This institution, however, with many others, was designed to teach the necessity of an atonement for sinful man, and of his flying to it as the only way of escaping from the curse of God's holy law. Jehovah taught the children of Israel, for a long time concerning the advent of the Messiah, and the nature of his kingdom, by types and shadows. Particular precepts which may appear to us, under our circumstances, and at our distance of time from their existence, of small moment, were of great importance to that people ; as calcu-

lated to keep them distinct from other nations, and to wean them from idolatrous rites, to which they were strongly inclined. We may add, that in all probability, had the Jewish ritual been as simple as the Christian, the Israelites could not have been kept to the observance of it in any tolerable degree, with their general character, without a constant series of miraculous interpositions : But such constant departures from the laws of nature, would, in time, have ceased to excite wonder, and the end for which miracles are wrought, would have been defeated.

WE may determine from the conduct of infinite wisdom, that it was not proper that divine revelation should communicate all the light to mankind in the days of Moses, which it has communicated since. The communication of truth was gradual, as appears from comparing the two Testaments together. Light was constantly increasing in the Jewish church, by the rise of new prophets, or the fulfilment of former prophecies, until the Sinai covenant was abolished. Comparatively dark as the ancient dispensation was, which continued for more than fifteen hundred years, every devout worshipper knew, that to obey was better than fac-

rifice ; and that the sum of duty consists in *doing justly, and in loving mercy, and in walking humbly with God.* The Jews were abundantly taught that the Messiah would become incarnate, and dwell among men ; and that by his advent light would break forth in greater brightness than in any former period. Hence, the woman of Samaria, who believed in the Old Testament, said, in her conference with Christ, in John iv. " I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ : when he is come, he will tell us all things."

THE manner in which God is to be worshipped, as revealed in scripture, is pure and rational : and contains an admirable display of infinite majesty and condescension. The homage required is adapted to fill the soul with holy reverence, and to inspire it with hope ; " For thus saith the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."*

How apostate man may come before the Lord and find acceptance, is a question on

* Isaiah lvii. 15.

which the light of nature is wholly silent. It is only in the inspired volume that the doctrine of the *atonement*, which hath been made by the Son of God, is revealed. The mediatorial plan was promulgated early after the apostacy of our first parents, even before they were banished from the garden of Eden for their disobedience. In the fulness of time the promised Saviour appeared in the world, made his soul an offering for sin, rose from the dead, and ascended to sit at the Father's right hand. Through him penitent sinners draw near to God, are delivered from the wrath to come, and are made heirs of eternal life. Whatever difficulties attend the expiatory scheme exhibited in the gospel, we may clearly discern in it, the infinite purity and rectitude of God's character and law—his hatred of sin; and the riches of his grace. These prominent features of the scripture doctrine of atonement, declare it to be worthy of the wisdom of the divine mind; and recommend it in the highest manner to our fallen race. It is only in consequence of the interposition of Jesus Christ, that any of mankind have obtained the heavenly happiness; whether before or since the actual incarnation of the Son of God: "Neither is there salvation in any

other ; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

REVELATION brings to light the future existence of man, the resurrection of the body, the future judgment, and the portion of the just and the unjust in the world to come. These are solemn truths ; suited to deter the wicked, and to encourage the good patiently to continue in well-doing. Nothing stamps value on time—on man's present life, like the eternal state which is to follow ; in which each one is to receive from the righteous judge of the living and the dead, according to the deeds done in the body. The punishment threatened to the impenitent is calculated to display the divine holiness and justice ; is fitted to their character, and to excite dread. The reward promised to the righteous, corresponds only with the temper of those whose hearts are united with the God of love.

THE piety and virtue inculcated in the oracles of truth, breathe a spirit to which the proud and selfish hearts of mankind are wholly opposed. Love to God and man is the root of the graces and virtues, which compose the character that meets the approbation of the infinite mind.

THE man whose piety is evangelical, makes an unfeigned dedication of himself to God ; and the feelings of his heart, so far as he is sanctified, fully harmonize with the divine law and government. He approaches his heavenly Father with filial reverence, and can, without reserve, adopt the form of prayer that Christ taught his disciples ; “ Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed “ be thy name : Thy kingdom come : Thy “ will be done on earth as it is in heaven. “ Give us this day our daily bread. And “ forgive us our debts as we forgive our “ debtors. And lead us not into tempta- “ tion, but deliver us from evil : For thine “ is the kingdom, and the power, and the “ glory, for ever, Amen.” This prayer, as one observes, “ for a succession of solemn “ thoughts, for fixing the attention upon a “ few great points, for suitableness to every “ condition, for sufficiency, for conciseness “ without obscurity, for the weight and real “ importance of its petitions, is without an “ equal or a rival.” The pious man is humble : He feels his absolute dependence on God for good of every kind. He mourns for sin, and begs for pardon through Him who died that sinners might live. While he avoids exercising himself in things that are too high for him, he makes it his study to

know and do the will of God—to maintain sobriety—and to keep alive a devotional temper. Taught that he is not his own, and that he is under the wise, holy and gracious dominion of the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, he denies himself, he endures afflictions with patience, he encounters evils with fortitude, and resigns every enjoyment to Him who guides the faithful through this disciplinary state. Not intimidated by the frowns, nor allured by the flatteries of the world, he, by divine aid, holds on his course till he finishes it with joy. He daily recounts in his closet, in social prayer, and in meditation, the mercies of the supreme benefactor, and is awakened to gratitude and praise. In solitary devotion he shuns the notice of mortals, shuts the door on the noise and business of the world, and prays to his father who is in secret. Modest and unassuming he is far removed from the ostentatious parade of the ancient Pharisees ; who professed religion to be seen of men, and chose the corner of the street, to attract the public notice while they recited their forms of devotion. The real disciple of Jesus Christ does not think highly of his own attainments ; but in honor prefers his fellow-Christians to himself. Knowing that every moral action begins in the heart, he labors to keep it with

all diligence, and is incited to watchfulness. Being a constant witness of remaining inward corruptions, he censures himself in thousands of instances where he stands acquitted in the eyes of mankind.

CHRISTIANITY breathes a kind, meek, and forgiving spirit. The heart of him who is under its influence is moved at the cry of distress, and his hand is open, according to his ability, to supply the wants of the poor, and to alleviate the miseries of the wretched. In almsgiving he does not sound a trumpet before him, but, as much as possible, dispenses his benefactions in secret. He does not indulge envy, malice, or revenge; but strives to overcome evil with good. He is not under the government of those passions which chastity forbids, but looks with abhorrence upon them; as unfitting the mind for pure enjoyment, and the inlet of innumerable evils to the human race. In his intercourse with mankind, he is just in his dealings, faithful to his engagements, and the fulfilment of the duties of his particular trust. He bears on his mind and heart the words of Christ, in Matthew vii. 12. *Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the*

prophets. The spirit of christian virtue tends to the diffusion of peace and happiness thro' families, societies, and the great brotherhood of man. How far do the most improved in the family of Christ on the earth, fall short of the pattern exhibited by his doctrine and example ! But imperfect as his followers are, the internal beauty of the gospel remains ; and its influences upon them speak in its praise. It is a part of its peculiar glory, to train up men from small beginnings of holiness to a state of perfect purity and joy.

IN a review of the argument in support of the inspiration of the Bible from the religion it contains, it is natural to inquire whence came such a scheme of faith and practice ? Where did Moses and the Israelites get such ideas of Deity as are exhibited in the Old Testament ? They did not derive them from Egypt ; for that kingdom was overrun with idolatry during their abode in it. They could not acquire their theology from any of the nations that bordered on Egypt, or Canaan, or from any other then on the earth ; for they were all involved in the darkness of paganism, and remained in that state until the days of the Apostles. Hence, the sacred writers who followed Moses could not have been enlightened in the

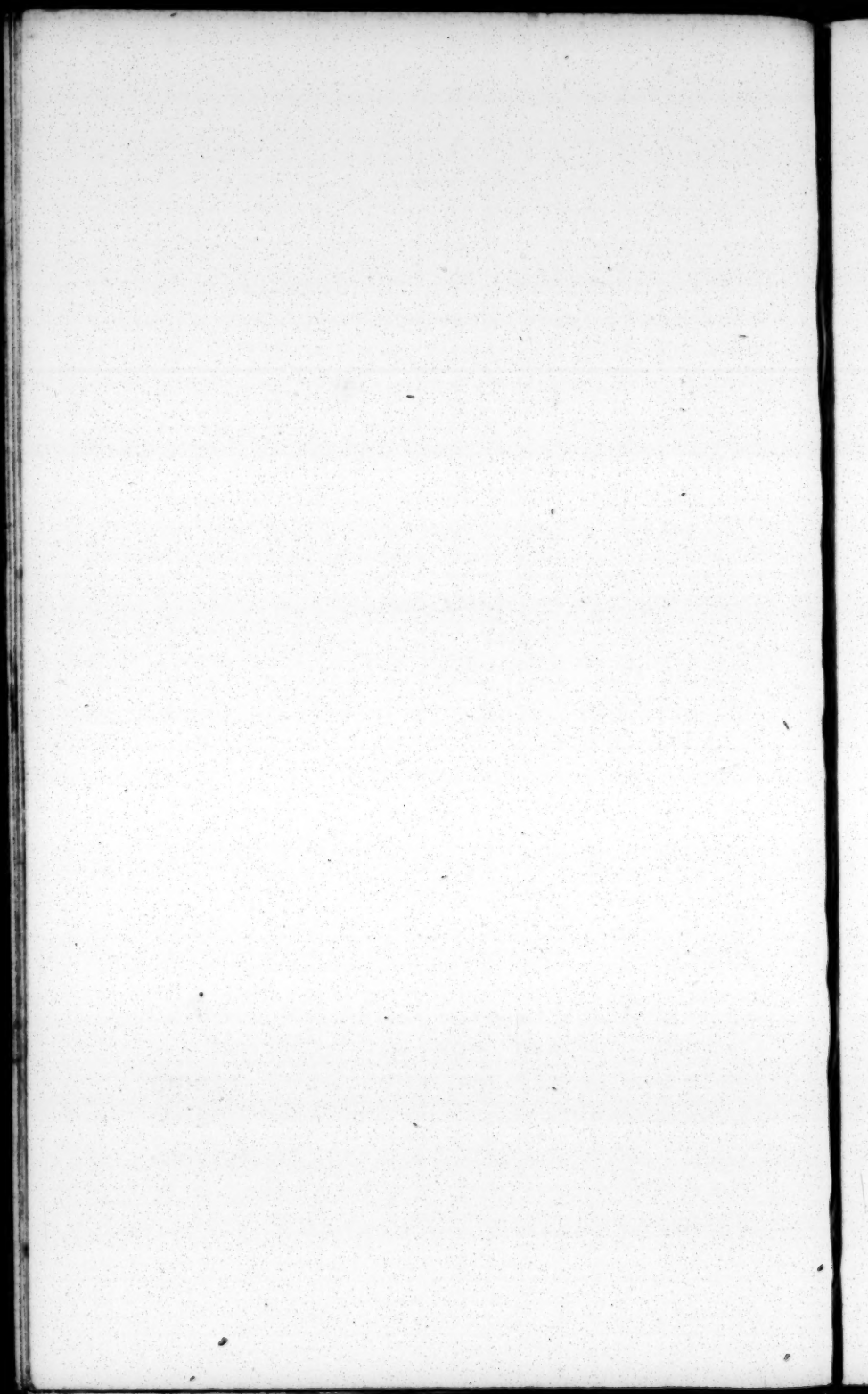
knowledge and worship of the one living and true God, by any men on the earth. It is well known that the heathens hold to a vast number of gods. Athens—learned and polite Athens, is said to have acknowledged deities to the number of thirty thousand. The objects to which pagans have paid divine homage, were, many of them fabricated by art ; and to all their gods have been attributed sensual appetites, and passions, or affections, unworthy of divinity. They are represented by those who adore them, as engaged in the amours of the libidinous, and as parties in the quarrels of proud and malicious men. Many of the heathen rituals enjoined the offering of human sacrifices ; and others encouraged drunkenness, obscenity, and whoredom. Some of the wiser men among the pagans have confessed the need of a supernatural revelation, to teach mankind how to worship the Deity aright. Modern infidels have gloried in the wisdom of a heathen Socrates. He was indeed one of the most deserving characters that can be found in the annals of pagan antiquity. This renowned philosopher, “ meeting Alcibiades, who was going to the temple to pray, proves to him that he knew not how to perform that duty aright, and that therefore it was not safe for him to do

" it ; but that he should wait for a divine
 " instructor to teach him how to behave
 " both towards the gods and men; and that
 " it was necessary that God should scatter
 " the darknefs which covered his foul, that
 " he might be put in a condition to dis-
 " cern good and evil."* Were Socrates a-
 gain to appear in the world, with his for-
 mer belief, he would disown those as his dis-
 ciples, who boast of his knowledge, as a
 proof of the sufficiency of human reason to
 direct mankind in the duties of piety and be-
 nevolence. But to return, I further ask,
 whence came the doctrine of the atone-
 ment, of the resurrection, and of the future
 state of rewards and punishments, as contain-
 ed in the scriptures? Who communicated
 the piety and virtue which are described and
 recommended in these writings? No one
 who is acquainted with the pagan theology,
 can, with the least colour of reason, pretend
 that the religion of the Bible was copied
 from the religion of idolaters. Does the
 spirit of the book, whose divine original I
 am endeavoring to maintain, carry the air
 of human invention? Good men would not
 impose a forgery on the world for truth.

* Leland's View of deistical writers, in 2 vol. page 11th of vol. I.

Bad men could not have a single motive to prompt them to devise such a scheme of faith and practice : For had they knowledge equal to the task, they would not have employed it in the establishment of a plan, which exposes and condemns them in its whole design. The drift of all the sacred books from Genesis to the Revelation of John, is directly in the face of fraud and every species of iniquity, both public and private. Besides, the humble, pious, and disinterested, spirit of the gospel, has not one charm to the unholy and the selfish. To admit that such characters as these last would invent such a religion, if competent in point of ability, would be as absurd as to grant, that a malicious man will direct every effort to promote the good of the one he inveterately hates, or that a selfish man will act from disinterested motives, or that a covetous man will make it his whole aim to be liberal.

THERE is no answer to be given to the question, whence came the religion contained in the Bible? that can satisfy a candid reflecting mind, but this, IT CAME FROM GOD ! And therefore the men who announced it to the world, spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.





DISCOURSE IV.

Objections raised against the commands for borrowing of the Egyptians, and the extirpation of the Canaanites, answered; and the evidence of Miracles considered.



2 TIMOTHY iii. 16.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

IN the conclusion of the last discourse, was introduced an argument in support of the inspiration of the Bible, taken from the nature of the religion it contains. Against its pure and benevolent nature several objections have been brought. I shall, in this place, attend to two, raised against the morality of certain parts of the Old Testament, which are delivered under the sanction of a divine precept. The difficulties I have in

view, are those which have been started from the commands which Jehovah gave to the children of Israel, to borrow of the Egyptians, and to cut off the Canaanites.

THE first of these injunctions is recorded in Exodus xi. 2. *Speak now in the ears of the people, and let every man borrow of his neighbor, and every woman of her neighbor, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold.* The Israelites practised agreeably to the direction received, on the night in which they left Egypt; as we learn from Exodus xii. 35, 36. "And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment. And the Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required; and they spoiled the Egyptians." It has been said that this conduct is not reconcileable with truth or justice, and therefore God could not authorize it as Moses declares; and that by certain consequence it must follow, that the book which contains the licence for such practice cannot be given by divine inspiration. To remove this objection it may be observed,

1st. THAT the Egyptians had long held the Israelites in cruel bondage, and, in point

of justice, owed them a large compensation in property, for their service; and to a higher amount than they actually received.

2dly. THE Hebrew verb rendered *borrow*, in the foregoing passages, literally signifies to *ask*; and is so translated in general.* According to this version the difficulty is at once removed. The Israelites had certainly an equitable claim on the Egyptians their oppressors; and on that ground might ask of them precious jewels and raiment.

3dly. THE difficulty does not appear insurmountable, if we allow the word *borrow* to stand, as in the Bible which we have in our hands. The Israelites were not holden, by any engagement of theirs to return the loan, until they should reach Mount Sinai, where they were to worship Jehovah their deliverer. But previously to their arrival at that place, Pharaoh and his host pursued them with a hostile design. The Lord interposed and cut off the king with his army, by drowning them in the red sea. The Israelites could be justified in retaining the jewels and the raiment in their possession, as the property of a public enemy. Under the

* Gen. xxxii. 29. Deut. iv. 32. xxxii. 7. Joshua iv. 6. Judges xviii. 5. 1 Sam. xii. 19. Psalm ii. 8. Isaiah vii. 12.

existing circumstances, what they first received in a way of loan, became spoil, and hence their obligation to return it ceased.

4thly. SINCE the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, he may transfer his gifts, in an extraordinary, as well as in an ordinary, manner, if he please. The plagues inflicted on the Egyptians in their own country, and their overthrow at the red sea, served as so many miraculous attestations in support of the equitable claim of the people whom they had so long oppressed, upon their goods ; and authorized the redeemed nation in holding the jewels and the raiment, which had been put into their hands. None can justly plead the case we have been considering as a precedent to redress their wrongs in the same way, unless they can produce miracles in their justification, as convincing as those that were wrought for the deliverance of the Israelites from their Egyptian bondage. The Lord brought them forth with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terrible-ness, and with signs, and with wonders. The wrath of Jehovah was awfully displayed in the punishment of the Egyptians. Ruin was spread over the face of their land, mourning for the death of their first-born

was heard from every house, and they were spoiled of their choicest treasures. The Lord brought forth his people "with silver and gold; and there was not one feeble person among their tribes. Egypt was glad when they departed; for the fear of them fell upon them."

I PROCEED to consider the difficulty arising from the command which Jehovah gave to the children of Israel, to destroy the inhabitants of Canaan. This objection has been accounted the most specious of any that has been brought against the divine original of the Bible; and has been much insisted on by deists. They have confidently affirmed, that the Israelites could have no just authority to go into Canaan, cut off its inhabitants by the sword, and take possession of their country; and that if it be admitted that the Israelites had righteousness on their side, in thus treating a people at peace with them, it will follow that any nation may deprive another of all that is dear to them as men, without violating the law of benevolence. The enemies of divine revelation have also dwelt much on the command for the *total* excision of the Canaanites, without respect to age or sex, as breathing a spirit of cruelty, and therefore unworthy of God.

I have been the more careful in calling up this objection in its full strength, because of the temporary embarrassment it has occasioned in so many minds, when they have begun to inquire into the authority of the scriptures. To assist in removing the difficulty, let the following things be considered.

1st. THE character of the Canaanites, whom the children of Israel were commanded to destroy. From the account given of them in sacred history, it appears that they were gross idolaters, and were addicted to vices of the most enormous kind. They consulted with familiar spirits, and practised the arts of sorcery and witchcraft. There was not a crime that agreed with their unbridled lusts, which they did not sanction by their idolatrous rites. *Even their sons and their daughters they burnt in the fire to their gods.* They lived in the open indulgence of fornication, incest, and the sin of Sodom. They even defiled themselves with the beasts of the field. Hence Jehovah gave the following prohibitory precept to the Israelites, "Defile not yourselves in any of these things; for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you. And the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself

vomitteth out her inhabitants.”* I know not whether it be possible to represent a nation in a more odious light, than by the figure of their land *vomitting them out*, as too loathsome to endure on its surface.

2dly. It is evident from the national character of the Canaanites, that they justly deserved destruction from the hand of God. His purity and justice forbid the lasting prosperity of a nation of profligates. The Lord did not suffer the Canaanites to be destroyed, until they had ripened themselves for ruin by obstinate wickedness. Near five hundred years before their conquest by Joshua, when God renewed the promise to Abraham, that his seed should possess their land, he declared that there would be a suspension of the performance until several future generations were passed away; and for the following reason—*The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.*† The righteous Lord did not suffer them to be cut off till their sins had long cried aloud for vengeance. Hence, he cautions his people, as in Deut. ix. 4. “Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the Lord thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness

* Deut. xviii. 12. Lev. xviii.

† Gen. xv. 16.

the Lord hath brought me in to possess this land ; but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord doth drive them out from before thee."

3dly. If the Canaanites justly deserved destruction from the hand of God, it must belong to him to appoint the manner of inflicting it. No one will contend but that the Lord might justly have wasted them, both old and young, by sickness, or famine, or have sunk them by an earthquake ; or have destroyed them by evils of a similar nature. None can deny that towns and cities have been overthrown in such ways, involving each sex and every age, without discrimination. The heart that murmurs at the providence which orders such events, as being neither consistent with rectitude nor goodness, is actuated by the spirit of atheism.

As the execution of the sentence against the wicked lies wholly in the breast of the supreme Judge, no reason can be assigned why He might not employ the arms of the Israelites, in cutting off the ancient inhabitants of Canaan. Intelligent creatures are as fully under his direction and control as the material world. Besides, when the former are used as the instruments in punishing, the tokens of the divine wrath are

considered as more explicit and dreadful than when evils come through other channels. When David was directed to choose out of war, famine, or pestilence, the scourge to chastise him for his sin in numbering Israel, he prayed that he might not fall into the hand of man.

4thly. THAT the Israelites were commissioned by Jehovah to destroy the Canaanites, is manifest from their history, after their departure from Egypt to their passing over Jordan. The divine miraculous interpositions in their behalf, establishes their commission beyond all reasonable doubt; when taken in connexion with the promises God made to Abraham, and other patriarchs who descended from him, that the land of Canaan should be given to the posterity of Jacob for an inheritance. From the words of Rahab the harlot, to the two spies whom Joshua sent to Jericho, it appears that the inhabitants of Canaan expected that the Israelites would conquer and possess their country, from the wonders wrought for their defence in the wilderness. Joshua ii. 9—11. “And she said unto the men, I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of

you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt ; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And, as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you : for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.

No objection can remain against the manner of destroying the Canaanites, after candidly attending to their character and desert, the right of the supreme Judge in appointing the instruments of his vengeance, and the full proof that is furnished in support of the commission given to the Israelites, to cut off those abandoned nations, and to plant themselves in their land.

If any should inquire why the instance we have been considering, may not be plead in favor of the Spaniards in destroying the aborigines of Mexico and Peru, under Cortez and Pizarro, I answer, that it does not appear that those American Indians were equally corrupt with the ancient Canaanites ; but on the supposition that they were, the Spaniards never had an immediate grant

from the supreme King, of the countries they invaded, nor had they a divine commission to kill or enslave the inhabitants. Those avaricious Europeans could not produce miraculous evidence in support of their claim, or of the war they carried on to acquire the lands and the gold of the natives ; therefore they were guilty of robbery and murder. They could not derive the least countenance from the principles that justify the conquest of Canaan by Joshua.

If any should pretend to vindicate the iniquitous traffic in the human species, that has been carried on for three hundred years past, by the command for the excision of the Canaanites, let them support their cause by miracles as striking as those that were wrought in favor of the children of Israel, in the days of Moses and Joshua. Let the men who are exploring the coasts of Africa in quest of slaves, open a passage to go on dry ground through wide and deep waters, and arrest the motions of our planetary system, by stretching out their hands, or lifting up their voice—I say, let them perform these or similar miracles in express support of their design, or let them desist from carrying misery and wretchedness to those shores,

as they would avoid the guilt of man-stealing, and of shedding innocent blood.

IN the destruction of the Canaanites, solemn warnings were given to the people of Israel, and to all other nations to whom the scriptures are known, against idolatry and vice. Is it not worthy of the holiness, justice and goodness of God to give such warnings to mankind? Did he not display his moral perfections by the deluge, and other judgments recorded in scripture history? The mind of Abraham must have been deeply impressed with a belief in the holy majesty of Jehovah, when early in the morning in which Sodom and Gomorrah were wrapped in flames, he beheld the smoke of the country going up, as the smoke of a furnace. The Lord will make ungodly nations to drink the cup of his wrath. Jere.xxv. 31. "A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth: for the Lord hath a controversy with the nations; he will plead with all flesh; he will give them that are wicked to the sword, saith the Lord."

HAVING attempted to obviate the foregoing objections, I proceed to introduce a *second* argument in support of the inspiration of the scriptures, taken from the miracles which they narrate. To these, appeals have

already been made, but their nature and design deserve a more particular consideration ; as well as the principal periods of sacred history in which they were wrought.

A MIRACLE is an event contrary to the laws of nature, or the stated course of divine operation, and is addressed to the external senses of mankind. A miracle is as perfectly within the reach of omnipotence, or is wrought with the same ease, as any other thing that is brought into existence. Should the Almighty now command the sun to rise in the west instead of the east, the event would be miraculous, because it is contrary to what are denominated the laws of nature. If water were to ascend a cataract, it would be a reversion of its common course, and therefore a miracle. The miracles recorded in the scriptures, were perceived by those who were present when they were performed, through the medium of their bodily organs. Thus, the appearances and the voice at Mount Sinai, when the law was given, struck the senses of the Israelites. When Christ walked on the sea of Galilee, his disciples were eye-witnesses. No train of reasoning is necessary to convince the spectators when a miracle is performed. Its sudden, extraordinary nature arrests the attention,

like the first appearance of a blazing comet, or the noise of thunder.

THE apparent design of miracles is to summon the attention of mankind, to some doctrine or duty, revealed or enjoined by Jehovah ; and at the same time to prove that the persons who deliver the truths or the laws, are commissioned by him. When God sends messengers with such credentials, their message is clothed with his authority, and demands our faith and obedience. Miracles, though most striking to those who were present when they were wrought, may be so well attested, as to answer the same general purposes to others down to the end of the world. They were of high and absolute importance in the establishment of the Jewish and Christian dispensations. To this general design may be reduced all the miracles recorded in the Old Testament, and in the New.

WE have no reason to expect the renewal of miracles ; because the canon of scripture has long since been closed. The precise period in which miracles ceased, I pretend not to determine : But we have no evidence that they were continued beyond the infancy of the christian church.

LET us attend to some of the miracles wrought by Moses. While he was in exile in the land of Midian, where he continued forty years, he led his flock to the back-side of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. To this humble shepherd the Angel of the Lord appeared, in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and was not consumed. As he turned aside to see this great sight, Jehovah called to him out of the midst of the bush, and commanded him to go down into Egypt, to deliver the children of Israel from their cruel bondage, and to conduct them unto the good land that he had promised to give them. Moses discovered great reluctance, at first, in entering on the work assigned him; and urged that his nation would not believe him, but would say, "The LORD hath not appeared unto thee." Jehovah directed him to cast the rod in his hand on the ground. He obeyed; it became a serpent; and he fled from before it. By the same authority, he caught it by the tail, and it again became a rod in his hand. He was next commanded to put his hand into his bosom; and when he took it out it was leprous as snow. He was ordered to put

his hand into his bosom again ; and on his plucking it out the second time, it was cured, and resumed the same appearance with his other flesh. Convinced by these two signs, as well as by other things, of his duty to undertake in the arduous work of delivering Israel from bondage, he with Aaron his brother, went down into Egypt, in obedience to the divine command. It appears from the history recorded in Exodus, that Moses, after his long exile, had given up the expectation which he had entertained forty years before, of delivering the Israelites, and that they were looking out for no such thing. This greatly strengthens the credibility of the story. On the refusal of Pharaoh to release the Israelites from bondage, according to the demand which Jehovah directed Moses to make, Aaron cast down the rod, which had undergone miraculous changes at Horeb, and it became a serpent, in presence of the Egyptian monarch and his ministers. Other miracles were afterwards wrought ; in turning the waters of Egypt into blood, in filling the land with frogs, and with swarms of flies, in the plagues of the hail, and the locusts, in bringing on a thick darkness over the land of three days continuance, and to name no more, in the death of the first born, both of man and beast, through-

out the realm, in one night. These miracles, in connexion with those afterwards performed at the red sea, at Mount Sinai, and other places, until the chosen people were put in possession of the land of promise, abundantly establish the inspiration of the Old Testament. Additional proofs of the same kind were afforded, from the conquest of Canaan till the days of the prophet Daniel. When Moses, a little before his death, was exhorting the children of Israel to keep the statutes and commandments of the Lord, he reminded them of the extraordinary manner in which God had redeemed them from Egypt, and revealed his will, as high motives for their obedience. He appealed to the signs and wonders which had been shown and wrought before their nation, in proof that their Almighty Redeemer was the only true God, and that their religion was from him. Deut. iv. 32—40. “For
 “ ask now of the days that are past, which
 “ were before thee, since the day that God
 “ created man upon the earth; and ask
 “ from the one side of heaven unto the other,
 “ whether there hath been any such
 “ thing as this great thing is, or hath been
 “ heard like it? Did ever people hear the
 “ voice of God speaking out of the midst
 “ of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live?

“ Or hath God assayed to go and take him
“ a nation from the midst of another nation,
“ by temptations, by signs, and by won-
“ ders, and by war, and by a mighty hand,
“ and by a stretched-out arm, and by great
“ terrors, according to all that the Lord
“ your God did for you in Egypt before
“ your eyes? Unto thee it was shewed, that
“ thou mightest know that the Lord he is
“ God; there is none else besides him.
“ Out of heaven he made thee to hear his
“ voice, that he might instruct thee: and
“ upon earth he shewed thee his great fire,
“ and thou heardest his words out of the
“ midst of the fire. And because he loved
“ thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed
“ after them, and brought thee out in his
“ sight with his mighty power out of Egypt;
“ to drive out nations from before thee,
“ greater and mightier than thou art, to
“ bring thee in, to give thee their land for
“ an inheritance, as it is this day. Know,
“ therefore, this day, and consider it in thine
“ heart, that the Lord he is God in heaven
“ above, and upon the earth beneath: there
“ is none else. Thou shalt keep, therefore,
“ his statutes, and his commandments, which
“ I command thee this day, that it may go
“ well with thee, and with thy children after
“ thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy

“ days upon the earth, which the Lord thy
 “ God giveth thee, forever.”

WHETHER the magicians, mentioned in Exqd. vii. and viii. performed real miracles, is a question which has often been brought up in attending to the miracles of Moses ; and has been differently answered by divines of high reputation in the Christian Church.

THOSE who adopt the affirmative side of the foregoing question, admit that the evidence is eventually full and decisive in support of the divine mission of Moses ; because that the magicians were early confounded in their contest with him, and were brought to confess that Moses was furnished with divine assistance. My limits will not permit me to enter largely into this subject ; I shall only suggest a few reasons against the hypothesis, that the magicians performed real miracles.

1st. If real miracles are admitted to be wrought on the side of those who are engaged for the support of error and wickedness, as the supposed miracles of the magicians in Egypt were, it will be very difficult to show how miracles do in any case confirm the divine mission of any person, or the divine au-

thority of any scheme of religion. Nicodemus, in the third chapter of John, appears to have spoken not only according to the belief of the Jews, but agreeably to the dictates of the human mind, when he said to Christ, *We know that thou art a teacher come from God ; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him.* -

2dly. MOSES discovers no marks of discouragement from any thing that the magicians are supposed to have done, in turning their rods into serpents, water into blood, or in bringing up frogs upon the land. But considering his very great diffidence in undertaking the arduous work to which he was called while in Midian, would he not have been greatly agitated, and have been ready to despond, if he had believed that the magicians were possessed of a power to do miracles ? How would he have relied on the sign of changing *his* rod into a serpent, as a proof of his divine commission, as the Lord had told him, if the magicians could also turn *their* rods into serpents ?

3dly. WHATEVER the magicians did, they never went first in performing any wonder ; but they in their operations always *followed* Moses. It is certainly much easier to imitate than to take the lead, in any thing either

great or rare. Men who composed an order of such antiquity and repute among the heathens, as were the magicians, must have acquired a dexterity in their art, which far surpasses any thing that has fallen under our notice.

4thly. It plainly appears to us, even at this distance of time and place from the scene in Pharaoh's court, that in two of the three instances in which the magicians imitated Moses, they wrought on a much smaller scale than he did. When Aaron stretched out the rod over the waters of Egypt, the Lord caused their streams, rivers, ponds, and all their pools to become blood; and they remained in that state seven days. The Egyptians, in that time of distress, opened wells or springs to procure water to drink. The magicians could have but a small quantity of water to operate upon. At the instant of time when Moses did his miracle there was no water for them to change, so much as in vessels of wood or stone. They might afterwards by their art cause the water taken from a newly opened spring or well, to assume the appearance of blood. It is affirmed by some great naturalists now living that a small quantity of water may be made to appear red like blood, by the efforts

of art. In the instance of the frogs the magicians could do very little ; because Moses had before caused them to go up from the waters of Egypt, and to cover the land.

5thly. PHARAOH is considered as more criminal for not letting the Israelites depart from their bondage, on account of the signs and wonders which were shown by Moses and Aaron, even while the magicians imitated their miracles. As a proof of this we need only advert to what is said concerning the Egyptian monarch, that *he hardened his heart*, or that *his heart was hardened*. If the magicians did as real miracles as Moses, how could Pharaoh's guilt have been increased in holding the children of Israel in slavery, against the light reflected upon his understanding and conscience by what Moses did ? What evidence could Pharaoh collect from signs, which were performed by those who demanded the release of the oppressed people, if his wise men who designed by their wonderful works to countenance him in his conduct, wrought as real miracles as were performed by Moses and Aaron ? If it should be said that the miracles performed by these last exceeded those wrought by the magicians, and therefore Pharaoh was the more criminal in refusing to let Israel go, it may

be answered, that according to this hypothesis, there was divine evidence against divine evidence ; which is absurd and contradictory. Besides, if Moses exceeded the magicians for the present, while the contest between them continued, how could Pharaoh determine before the trial closed, that the latter would not in a future instance get the victory over the former ? While there was room to doubt, the Egyptian monarch could not be blamed for waiting the issue of the contest ; and consequently his guilt would not have been increased by the miracles of Moses, during the performance of counter miracles. There appears to be no way to avoid these difficulties, but that of denying that the magicians wrought real miracles.

6thly. PHARAOH never applied to the magicians to take away the plagues while they imitated Moses ; but in every instance to the latter. He could not be influenced to this conduct by his native inclination or interest. How can this behaviour of his be accounted for, except on the ground, that he was compelled to believe that Moses only was endowed with miraculous powers ?

7thly. THE magicians are expressly said, in the three instances in which they imitated Moses, to have wrought *with their incant-*

ments. The original word rendered *inchantments*, in Exodus vii. and viii. is derived from a verb which signifies *to hide*, or *conceal*, and the plural noun derived from it, signifies *incantations*, or *charms*, or *juggling tricks*; whereby true appearances are covered, and false ones are imposed on the eyes of the spectators. The divine law forbids the use of this art; Levit. xix. 26. "Ye shall not eat any thing with the blood; *neither shall ye use enchantment*, nor observe times." The servants of Jehovah did not indulge such operations. Even Balaam, when he found himself compelled to bless the people of Israel, instead of cursing them according to the wishes of his heart, "went not as at other times *to seek for enchantments*."* From the use of enchantments adopted by the magicians in Egypt, it may be fairly concluded that what they did, was performed by the exertion of their art; and that therefore they wrought no miracle.

8thly. WHEN the magicians failed in their attempt to bring forth lice with their enchantments, they said unto Pharaoh *This is the finger of God*; which confession implies that what they had done before was effected by art. It is to be observed that the magi-

* Numb. xxiv. 1.

cians do not say, " This is the finger of *the Lord*, or *Jehovah*," in whose name Moses did his miracles ; but that, " This is the finger of *God*." The word translated *God*, in this passage, is applicable to any Deity ; as we find from the use of it in the scriptures. It may therefore be inferred, that the magicians themselves acknowledged that there was no special interposition of *Deity* in all which they had done.

If the foregoing arguments are well founded, it must appear unnecessary that the sacred historian should have said in a formal manner, that the magicians in Egypt wrought no real miracle ; since the same idea is communicated by the words which narrate their operations—" *They did so with their incantments.*"

THE magicians, and kindred orders of men, might do many strange and marvellous things in the days of Moses, and they may now ; but we seem not to have any evidence that God hath ever wrought a miracle by their hands. When Baal's prophets in the time of Elijah made an effort to call down fire from heaven upon their altar, they were not able to accomplish their wishes. When the exorcists, mentioned in Acts xix. undertook to cast out evil spirits by invoking

the name of Jesus, in connexion with their art, they were dreadfully confounded : ver. 15, 16. " And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know ; but who are ye ? And the man in whom the evil spirit was, leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded." Antichrist claims the power of working miracles, but those he exhibits, are stilled, in scripture, *lying wonders* ; not only because they are designed to establish heresy, but because the facts to which he appeals are not of the miraculous kind : as will fully appear to any one who peruses the legends of the Romish church, together with the writings of the reformers.

HAVING attended to the case of the magicians, which is the most difficult of the kind recorded in the Bible, I need not pay particular attention to that which is contained in 1 Samuel xxviii. relative to the resurrection of the prophet by the witch of Endor. She is not to be considered as a worker of miracles, if some person, under the cover of the night was substituted by her to announce to Saul his destiny. This would be wholly the effect of art. Nor can she be ranked among the performers of mir-

acles, if, as is most probable, Jehovah interposed and raised Samuel, to deliver to the wicked king of Israel his doom. It is I think, obvious from the history, that while the witch was about to practise the art of divination, the prophet suddenly appeared. If this be admitted as fact, she was in no sense employed as an instrument in producing the miracle.

THE last miraculous event in the old Testament history which I shall consider, is the one that was performed in the time of the prophet Elijah : Of this we have a particular account in 1 Kings xviii. That prophet lived in the time when Ahab reigned over Israel ; a prince who gave himself up with Jezebel his wife, to idolatry and wickedness, above all who had been raised to the throne before him. A drought of more than three years continuance was sent upon the land, for the wickedness of the king and his people ; and was followed by a dreadful famine. The prophet Elijah was commissioned by Jehovah to denounce to Ahab the withholding of the dew and the rain during that gloomy period. Near its close he came out of his retirement by divine command, and went boldly to meet the king, who had been

seeking to find the place where the prophet was sheltered, that he might put him to death. "And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, art thou he that troubleth Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim. Now, therefore, send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table." Ahab assembled the people and the prophets according to desire. "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, how long halt ye between two opinions, if the LORD be God, follow him : but if Baal, then follow him." The people manifested by their silence, that they had nothing to say against so reasonable a proposal. "Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord ; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Let them, therefore, give us two bullocks ; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under ; and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under. And call ye on the name of your

gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD; and the god that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said it is well spoken." The priests of Baal took the bullock which they chose, and prepared and laid it on their altar. They cried to their god from morning to evening, but there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded. Elijah proceeded to repair the altar of the LORD before all the people. He made a trench about it, and laid on the wood and the bullock in order. He commanded water to be poured upon the burnt-sacrifice and the wood: This was done three times. "And the water ran about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water. And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me; that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again." The people must have waited with anxious desire to see the issue—the controversy decided, whether JEHOVAH or Baal be the true God.

The suspense was immediately removed after the prayer of Elijah was closed. "The fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt-sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench." The people felt the decision of the controversy—They could not doubt for a moment. "They fell on their faces, and they said, THE LORD, HE IS THE GOD ! THE LORD, HE IS THE GOD !" In this instance we behold in a striking manner, the proof which miracles afford that JEHOVAH is the only true God, and that mankind are under the highest obligations to worship and obey him, as required in his word.

I PASS to the consideration of some of the miracles recorded in the New Testament.

THE number of miracles performed by Jesus Christ was much greater than those which were done by Moses, or Elijah, or any who came before him. He went about all the cities and villages in the land of Israel, healing every sickness and disease.* "His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases, and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had

* Matth. ix.

the palsy ; and he healed them.”† He cured persons, and that in an instant, who were deaf, and blind, and dumb, and lame. They immediately recovered their hearing, their sight, their speech, and the use of their limbs ; and remained in a state of recovery. He removed completely at once, infirmities which had been of many years standing. This is altogether different from curing by the application of medicine ; which is very slow in its progress in overcoming chronic disorders. Christ restored soundness to the body, as well as regularity to the mind, by uttering a word. Many such miracles as the foregoing were performed in a public manner, and before enemies. He fed four thousand men, beside women and children, with seven loaves of bread, and a few little fishes ; and seven baskets of fragments remained. At another time he fed about five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes ; and twelve baskets of fragments remained. He silenced the tempest by his voice, and he walked on the waves of the sea. He restored life to the dead. Three instances are particularly mentioned, viz. the widow’s son at Nain, Jairus’s daughter at Capernaum, and Lazarus at Bethany. Let us

† Matth. iv. 24.

bestow our attention for a moment on these instances.

WHEN Jesus approached the gate of the city of Nain, with many of his disciples and much people, he met a funeral procession. A croud had collected to mourn with a sorrowful mother, in a state of widowhood, whose only son had fallen a victim to death in the bloom of youth : the corpse was now moving to the land of silence. The compassion of Jesus was tenderly touched, as he beheld the flowing tears of a solitary widow, mourning for her only son. "He said unto her, weep not. And he came and touched the bier ; and they that bare him stood still." The attention of the throng must have been fixed upon this stranger—Their eyes and their ears were open—What doth this traveller design ! The multitude soon heard and saw with amazement—He spoke with an audible voice, *Young man ! I say unto thee, Arise !* " And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother." The spectators felt a solemn awe ; " and they glorified God, saying, that a great prophet is risen up among us ; and, that God hath visited his people."*

* Luke vii.

JAIRUS, a ruler of the synagogue, had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, who lay a dying. He came to Jesus, who was then surrounded by a multitude, and fell at his feet, and with all the distress and anguish which a father feels, when his child appears to be in the agonies of death, besought him to go to his house to stay the departing spirit. As the great physician did not repair to the place so soon as requested, word was soon brought him that the maiden was dead, and that he needed not make the visit lately requested. But when Jesus heard it, he told the messenger, that she should be made whole. He went to the melancholy house, and found the family weeping and bewailing their dead friend. "He took her by the hand, and called, saying, *Maid! arise!* And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway."*

LAZARUS of Bethany, was raised from the dead after he had lain in the grave four days. This miracle was wrought in presence of a great number of spectators. They heard the commanding voice of the Son of God, *Lazarus, come forth!* They saw him coming forth from the grave. Some who were present believed on Jesus as the prom-

* Luke viii.

ised Messiah ; but others went their ways to the Pharisees, and made them acquainted with the miraculous event. Whereupon the Jewish council was assembled ; the members of which said to each other “ What do we ? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him ; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.—From that day forth, they took counsel together for to put him to death.”*

THE resurrection of Jesus Christ, is a miracle, which taken in all its circumstances, is the most remarkable of any that was ever wrought in our world, and furnishes the highest evidence of his divine mission, and that the gospel is from God. Jesus showed unto his disciples while he was pursuing his public ministry, that he must go up to Jerusalem, be delivered into the hands of men, suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.†

HAD not Jesus Christ risen from the dead, his religion must have early perished. Its fate would have been the same with that of the French prophets, a set of enthusiasts who

* John xi. † Matth. xvi. 21. Mark ix. 31.

appeared in England about a hundred years ago. When one of their chiefs lay on his death-bed, and was actually expiring, he told his followers round him that he should rise on a certain day and hour; and that if he failed, they must conclude that they had been deluded. The day came—a vast number of people assembled round the grave—as the hour approached, a noted partisan lifted up his voice, and called to his deceased friend—Rise! Oh rise! or we are undone! But the clouds continued to cover the dead body, and the delusion was detected in the eyes of the world. If Christ had not risen, as he predicted, his cause would have sunk. Saith the Apostle Paul in 1 Cor. xv. *If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.*

THE death of Jesus was not in private among his friends, but in public among his enemies; by whom he was executed as a malefactor. When he was taken down from the cross, his enemies were fully satisfied that he was dead. Life could not have remained in him after the Roman soldier had thrust the spear into his side. His body was lodged in a sepulchre hewn out of a rock, a stone was rolled unto its door. By Pilate's order a seal was put upon the stone, and a

guard of soldiers was placed by it. On the third day, *Behold, there was a great earthquake : for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightening, and his raiment white as snow. And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. The angel said to the women who came unto the sepulchre, Jesus who was crucified is not here ; for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.**

THE women who visited the sepulchre in the morning after Christ arose, did not expect in their setting out to find him alive, for their design was to anoint the dead body with the spices they had prepared. None of the disciples of Christ expected his resurrection. They never could understand during his life how his dying, and to be sure in such ignominy, was reconcileable with his Messiahship. They were slow to believe in the resurrection of Christ, after the event had taken place. The force of evidence alone gained their faith. The appearances of Christ to them were continued at different times and places, when few and many were together, during the course of forty days.

* Matth. xxviii.

He was seen of above 500 brethren at once; of whom the greater part remained alive when Paul wrote his first epistle to the church of Corinth; many years after the ascension.

THE story of the watch placed at Christ's sepulchre, *That his disciples came and stole him away while they slept*, is full of absurdities. They were hired to tell it by a large sum of money given them by the chief priests and elders of the Jews. Do men need bribing to tell the truth? Does not the design of a bribe always carry in it a wish to conceal facts? Besides, as it is well known that those who slept on guard, were if detected, punished by the Roman laws with death, the soldiers would not have dared to confess themselves asleep when on duty, had not the Jewish rulers agreed to pacify Pilate on their behalf. Had there been the least pretext for the story the soldiers told, the chief priests would have been the first men in Judea to bring the watch to punishment; as that would have given credibility to the account which they strove to propagate. Every thing relative to the conduct of the chief priests in this affair, carries fraud in the face of it, and confirms the truth of Christ's resurrection. Moreover, the testimony given by the watch relative to a fact,

which, by their own confession, took place while they were asleep, is of such a nature, as is wholly inadmissible before a court of justice, or by the dictates of common sense. Are men to be credited in affirming a fact, which they declare to have happened at a time when they could have no consciousness of it? Is there an honest man of common understanding upon the globe, who would venture to decide in any thing of consequence on such testimony?

It has been objected to the truth of Christ's resurrection that he did not show himself after his death to his judges, and his enemies in general. To obviate this difficulty, it may be observed, that if Christ after he left the sepulchre had gone into their presence, they probably would, from the malice and blindness they had discovered, have considered the appearance as an idle dream; and have remained as obstinate as they were after the resurrection of Lazarus. But let us suppose that by such an appearance they had all been gained over to the belief of the fact, and had become Christ's disciples, would not the enemies of the gospel have said, that since all the great men in the nation had received it, the whole was a contrived plan, and therefore ought to be given up as a cunningly devised fable?

This objection would have carried much more plausibility in it than any that can now be urged. Christianity did not rise up under the patronage of the powerful and the great. It was left to work its way in the world by its internal evidence, and the gracious aids of its founder. Several persons of learning and note were converted to it in its infancy ; among these was Saul of Tarsus ; but they became friends to the gospel in a way that gives not the least countenance to the suggestion, that it owed its birth to the wisdom of this world. Christ crucified was to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness.

WITHIN a short time after Christ's resurrection, his disciples publicly and boldly proclaimed it in Jerusalem, where he was put to death ; and wrought miracles on the ground that he was alive. They went forth and preached this doctrine every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.

TO CONCLUDE, we have decisive evidence from the miracles of Moses and the Prophets, and from those of Jesus Christ, and his Apostles, that all scripture is given by inspiration of God.

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DISCOURSE V.

The evidence from the Prophecies considered ; several popular objections answered ; and the discourses concluded with an improvement.



2 TIMOTHY iii. 16.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

IN the two last discourses, arguments were introduced to prove the divine inspiration of the scriptures, from the nature of the religion they contain, and the miracles recorded in them. I now proceed to a *third* argument, derived from the fulfilment of their prophecies.

By prophecy is meant, the foretelling of events that are not within the reach of human probability, and of which no knowledge

can be obtained beforehand but from God. To look into futurity and discern such events, with the time and circumstances of their coming into existence, is peculiar to the infinite mind. *Isaiah xlv. 9, 10. Remember the former things of old : for I am God, and there is none else ; I am God, and there is none like me ; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.*

THAT the scriptures abound with prophecies, will be denied by none who have read them. The prophecies are so interwoven with the sacred writings, as not to be separated. If the predictions were not delivered before the events which they hold up as future, had happened, we must give up the Bible, and consider it as a forgery. But if the prophets were let into the secrets of futurity, as we have abundant evidence from the fulfilment of their predictions, they were immediately enlightened from on high, and the scriptures are demonstrated to be the word of the Lord. It has been often proved that the prophecies respecting the captivity of the Jews in Babylon, the coming of Jesus of Nazareth, the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and many others,

were deliverd prior to the events which answer to them. The argument in favor of the divine original of the Bible from prophecy, carries irresistible force, when we reflect on the conduct of providence in fulfilling predictions at the present time, which all will grant were written and published many ages ago. To two prophecies of this kind, I now call your attention.

I SHALL begin with the prophecy concerning Ishmael, Abraham's son by Hagar, recorded in Gen. xvi. As that woman was wandering in the wilderness, "The angel
 " of the Lord said unto her, I will multiply
 " thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be
 " numbered for multitude.—Behold, thou
 " art with child, and shalt bear a son, and
 " shalt call his name Ishmael; because the
 " Lord hath heard thy affliction. And he
 " will be a wild man; his hand will be a-
 " gainst every man, and every man's hand
 " against him: and he shall dwell in the
 " presence of all his brethren." This prediction principally relates to Ishmael's posterity; but a small part of it, beside his birth, could have any accomplishment in his person. A numerous seed descended from him, which remain to this day. It is said of

his descendants, in Gen. xxv. 18. That “ they dwelt from Havilah unto Shur, that is before Egypt, as thou goest towards Assyria.” The place here assigned to them is the same with what was afterwards in scripture called *Arabia*, and continues to have the same name, and to be possessed by the same people, to the present time. The Arabians have never been conquered either by the Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Tartars, or any other nation. They have always been a pest to mankind, and have practised robberies upon them. Their hand has been against every man, and of course, every man’s hand has been against them, but none have been able to conquer them. They have lived in the midst of all their brethren. In the earlier periods of their history, the descendants of Abraham by Keturah, and the posterity of Isaac bordered upon them. To whatever power these neighbours, or others, rose, they retained their dominion; and were not driven from any part of their territories. “ They have from first to last maintained their independency, and notwithstanding the most powerful efforts for their destruction, still dwell in the presence of all their brethren, and in the presence of all their enemies.”*

* Newton on the Prophecies, in two Volumes, 9th Edition, p. 25, 26. Vol. I.

WHO but the omniscient God could have foreseen the state of the descendants of Ishmael? Is not the fulfilment of the predictions concerning them a striking proof in support of the divine original of the scriptures?

THE prophecies respecting the state of the Jews, which have been fulfilled in the latter ages, and are now fulfilling, are too remarkable to be passed by in silence, when attending to the present subject. The dispersion and the wretchedness of that people were foretold by Moses. The curses which should fall upon them for their disobedience, are particularly and largely denounced in Deut. xxviii. I shall select a few passages only; ver. 37. *And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word, among all nations whither the Lord thy God shall lead thee.* Verses 64, 65, 66. *And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone. And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest; but the Lord will give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day*

and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life. These predictions were in a degree fulfilled by the captivity of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, by the Assyrians and Chaldeans ; but have received a fuller accomplishment in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and in the present dispersion of the Jews. These last events were foretold by Jesus Christ, in Luke xxi. 24. *And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations : and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*

THE Jews were slaughtered in immense numbers, when their city was taken by Titus the Roman general. A vast multitude has perished since, by massacres and persecutions. The Jews have not been permitted to possess the land of Canaan or Palestine, for more than 1700 years ; and they are scattered through Asia, and through most of the countries of Europe and Africa ; they are found on the American continent, and its adjacent islands. Their land has passed from one set of conquerors to another, and is now in the hands of the Turks ; and remains in a low and wretched state. The Jews since their last dispersion have, for the most part, found no rest ; but the

Lord has given them *a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind*. They have not enjoyed the rights of other citizens in the places where they have lived, they have been banished from many kingdoms ; and in not a few instances, government has laid its hand on the property of that unhappy people, in a way of fine and confiscation. They have been detested by the nations, and have been *a by-word* among them. However criminal the Jews may have been, the benevolent heart is pained by even a summary recital of their sufferings, and is rejoiced at the milder treatment they have met with of late. We hope that the period is at hand when their calamities will cease, by the universally opening a door for their enjoyment of freedom, as is done by the spirit of the civil constitution of the United States of America ; and above all by their union with the Gentiles throughout the world under the Messiah.

It is remarkable that the Jews, tho' they have met with such hardships and cruelties, yet remain a distinct people. This is the Lord's doing ; and verifies what was spoken long ago by the prophets. I shall only mention in this place a passage recorded in Jerem. xxx. 11. addressed to Israel, *For I*

am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee : though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee ; but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.

The Jews have not, like other nations, been swallowed up and lost in conquests, by intermingling with their conquerors, or with those among whom they have lived. Tho' they have had the strongest inducements to intermarry, and to blend in all respects, with the Gentiles, they, as a body, remain as widely separated from them by blood and religion as ever. However, they have, in some instances, externally complied with the idolatrous rites of the Romish church, to avoid the cruelties of the court of inquisition, they have at the same time adhered to the faith of their ancestors ; and when they have escaped from the danger of the rack, they have renounced christianity in every form, and openly returned to their religion. They remain to this day a striking proof that the author of the prophecies respecting them is divine ; and consequently that the scriptures are given by inspiration of God.

WOULD our limits permit, we might point to the fulfilment of many prophecies, which were delivered long before the events

they predict were brought into existence. Babylon now lies in ruins, "a possession for the bittern, and pools of water." Tyre, once "a mart of nations," is made "like the top of a rock; a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea." We behold the man of sin, whose rise was predicted in the prophecies of the Old and New Testament, "sitting in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God; whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders." And, to name no more, we behold now fulfilling the prophecy recorded in Revelation xvii. 16. "And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate, and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire." The European kingdom which lead the way in giving temporal dominion to the beast revived under the anti-christian tyranny, is now seizing on the wealth and destroying the influence which she once gloried in giving to the Roman Pontiff. We are furnished with abundant proof, that the pens of the prophets were guided by Him who, from eternity, beholds all the events of time. The nearer we approach to the end of the world, the evidence in support of the inspiration of the Bible

from the fulfilment of the prophecies, becomes more and more clear and convincing. Whatever abuses are made of the increasing light by the wicked, "the wise shall understand."

My designed brevity on the copious subject of these discourses, forbids me to add to the foregoing arguments. I shall, after noticing a few popular objections, conclude with a practical improvement.

SOME have attempted to countenance their dislike of the scriptures, by saying, that the language adopted in some parts of those writings, particularly in certain passages in the Old Testament, puts modesty to the blush.

Persons of much information will not be perplexed with this difficulty. It will at once occur to them, that when God speaks to any part of the human race, he must address them in a language which they understand, or the design of revelation will be lost. It must follow of course, that the language of the age and the place when and where the revelation is made, must be adopted. The meaning of particular words is constantly altering by usage. The word *knave*, for instance, in our language, was heretofore understood to mean a *diligent servant* ;

but custom now appropriates it to one who is guilty of *fraud* in his dealings with mankind. Custom is as much the standard of decency in the clothing of our thoughts, as in the clothing of our bodies. Some of the words and phrases in our translation of the Bible, which may appear indelicate when compared with modern style, did not offend against delicacy two hundred years ago; and they may not two hundred years hence, or in a much shorter term. Among a civilized people it is as easy to discern a rotation in words and phrases, as in any thing else that is equally under human control. It would be very strange indeed, if the original language of the pentateuch, which was committed to writing more than three thousand years ago, perfectly suited the various tastes which have prevailed in style, from the days of Moses to our time. It is to be remarked that the books which he wrote have passed through very different states of society, in the lapse of so many ages; to each of which it is impossible that they should be compleatly conformed: Yet the manner in which those books were written will abide the test of sound criticism at the present era of high literary improvement.

LET us admit, for a moment, that the whole phraseology and manner of writing in the most ancient parts of the Jewish scriptures, perfectly corresponded with modern taste—I say, let us make this supposition, in order to learn whether that part of the Bible which is accused of indelicacy, would be as defensible as it now is. We may discern at once the effect of the supposed change. The men who cavil now, would immediately tack about, and exclaim against the pentateuch as a forgery, from its style. Hence, we see that the antiquity of the style used in the Mosaic writings, as well as in other parts of scripture, is a matter of importance in the controversy with infidels. It was as proper that the sacred penmen should adopt the language and manner of writing peculiar to their own times, as that in alluding to mountains in their discourses to the Jews, they should name *Horeb*, *Carmel*, or *Hermon*, rather than the *Allegany*, or the *Andes*. After what has been said on the change of the meaning of words and the state of society, it is evident that no one has any just cause to impeach the language of the scriptures of offences against modesty.

THE disputes about what the religion of the Bible is, among those who profess to

adopt it, have been urged by some as an objection against its divine original. To this it may be answered,

1st. THAT the enemies of divine revelation are not agreed among themselves. Some infidels profess to believe that God is a good being ; others deny that any such conclusion can be formed. Some of them consider the soul of man as immortal ; whilst others suppose that it dies with the body. If the disputes among christians overthrow christianity, the disputes among deists overthrow deism. The objection weighs nothing on either side, and is wholly impertinent.

2dly. A CONSIDERABLE number of the controversies among christians do not respect the essentials of their religion ; but are to be accounted for from the manner in which they are educated, the religious treatises they read, the persons with whom they associate in the early periods of serious thoughtfulness, and similar causes. Differences of this kind do not prove that the Bible inculcates opposite principles ; for it is admitted that they do not materially affect what is necessary to fit men for everlasting happiness.

3dly. It is granted that opinions have been maintained by some who profess to believe in the inspiration of the scriptures, which strike at their fundamental truths. But the rise of damnable heresies is so far from overthrowing the Bible, that it confirms it; for that book contains many predictions that such errors will appear; especially in the last days.

VIOLENT prejudices have been conceived against the religion of Jesus Christ, from the bad things which have been done under the cloak of it. To remove this stumbling block, let it be observed,

1st. **THAT** if the bad things which have been done by those who call themselves christians, go to the subversion of the gospel, deism must be overthrown according to the same plan of reasoning. I presume that no one who is the most warmly engaged in support of infidelity, will affirm that all deists have shown high reverence to the Deity in their behaviour, or that they have all been men of sobriety, justice, mercy and truth. We have to acknowledge with grief, that many abominable things have been done by persons who have called themselves the disciples of Jesus Christ; but if we must give up our religion on account of their conduct,

the deists must give up theirs on account of the impious and debauched morals of some of their order.

2dly. THERE is nothing in the nature of revealed religion which tends to the corruption of morals ; but every thing in it tends to make bad men better. The moral law requires holiness, and forbids every sin. The gospel breathes the same spirit. It promises pardon and happiness only to the penitent, and encourages with the hope of a crown of righteousness, patient continuance in well doing. The punishments threatened to the wicked are suited to alarm them, and to deter from the practice of iniquity. The religion of Jesus Christ has actually had the happiest influence on those who have cordially embraced it ; as has appeared from their lives and deaths.

3dly. WICKED men would not cloak their wickedness under the garb of the christian profession, unless there were something in the gospel which recommends it to the consciences of mankind. There could be no counterfeit coin, if there were no real coin. Men do not counterfeit iron or lead ; but silver and gold, or something that represents the value of these precious metals. Those persons who commit iniquity under

the mask of friendship to the gospel, are so far from proving it to be of no worth, that even they themselves by implication, testify in its favor, though it is against their lusts.

4thly. WE ought not to conclude against the worth of the christian religion from its abuses, on account of the absurdities which such an inference will draw after it. We must, to be consistent with such a conclusion, pronounce all the blessings of common providence to be evils in themselves; for they all have been, and still are, shamefully abused. If we pronounce every thing bad, and to be avoided, which has been employed for a bad purpose, we must consider as evil, food and raiment, the ground on which we tread, the streams that water it, the produce of the garden and the field, the light which strikes our eyes, and the air we breathe. We need not wonder that persons who dispute against the goodness of God, from the pains they bring upon themselves by abusing it, wish to take refuge in annihilation, and indulge the forlorn hope that by suicide they shall hasten their return to the womb of nothing.

5thly. IT will be acknowledged by every candid observer, that the religion of the gospel promotes social happiness in every circle

in which it reigns. It prevents the wretchedness which flows from riot and debauchery, suppresses the malignant passions, and diffuses the calm and pure pleasures of temperance, diligence, contentment, and friendship. Whatever persecutions have been endured for righteousness' sake, it is too plain to be denied, that the practice of christianity gives a happiness to individuals and to collective bodies, to which those are strangers who treat it with contempt. It has moreover been abundantly demonstrated by able writers, that where it is externally regarded by the inhabitants of a country in general, their morals are not so loose as are those of nations devoted to pagan idolatry.

It is hoped that the observations which have been made, will be thought sufficient to wipe away the reproach which has been cast upon the christian religion, from the bad things that have been done by its hypocritical professors.

THOSE who reject the divine authority of the Bible, have endeavored to justify their unbelief, by pleading, that they cannot be under obligations to conform their faith and practice to a book, which contains mysteries above the comprehension of the human mind.

If the objections of this kind are just, it will follow that we are not bound to believe any thing which we cannot comprehend. But is there a man on the earth, "in his right mind," who will avow this consequence? We are unable to comprehend the works of nature with which we are surrounded. We know not how water is congealed into the hardness of stone; nor can we comprehend the growth of even a single blade of grass. Man is a mystery to himself. He cannot tell why certain kinds of food nourish his body rather than others; nor how his limbs are put in motion by the volitions of his soul. If we are not bound to give our assent to any thing which we cannot understand in all its parts, we must deny facts which are daily taking place before our eyes, yea more, we must deny our own existence. The objection we are now considering will go to atheism; for no creature can fathom absolute eternity. If there be a God he never had a beginning. When the human mind contemplates this subject it is swallowed up and lost. "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?"

IN the supernatural revelation God hath

made of his will, he speaks like himself—a Being infinitely great. Were all the mysteries which are delivered in the sacred volume, perfectly on a level with our limited minds lately called into existence, the government of the moral world would be placed in a lower grade than the kingdom of nature, and we should not have the same evidence as we now have that the finger of God is imprinted on the scriptures. But tho' some of the doctrines of the Bible are so high that we can know but little concerning them in this dark probationary state, they can be sufficiently apprehended even by babes in understanding to obtain eternal life. Besides, the truths which are most mysterious are so interwoven with those which are plain, that if we reject the former, we must reject the latter. The various parts of this remarkable book form one harmonious system of faith and practice.

THE last objection that I shall notice is taken from the small extent within which the writings of the Old and New Testament have been known. Since the scriptures exhibit an exclusive claim of guiding the human race in the way of truth and happiness, it is contended, that their partial spread is inconsistent with the character of Him who is

the Father of all mankind, and is no respecter of persons ; and that therefore they cannot be given by inspiration of God. To obviate this objection, let the following things be considered,

1st. GOD in his common providence distributes his gifts, both of body and mind, very variously ; as daily experience teaches. It will not be pretended that men have just cause to complain of him, because he bestows upon some a more vigorous animal frame, or a higher degree of intellect, than upon others. No reason can be assigned, why the means of moral and religious improvement may not be as greatly diversified, by the sovereign of the universe, as other blessings are. Besides, the obligation derived from privileges, is proportioned to their nature and degree. Mankind are not punished for disregarding truths of which they could have no knowledge ; but for resisting the light that has shone before them.

2dly. SINCE the whole human race have forfeited every favor from the hand of God, by sin, he may justly exclude them all from happiness, and consequently may deny them opportunity of becoming acquainted with those writings which contain the words of eternal life. All the favors enjoyed by

apostate creatures, flow from divine sovereign mercy ; which excludes every idea of claim on their part. Those, therefore, who are left in heathenish darkness, experience no injustice. Their demerit is not lessened, nor is their state rendered any more deplorable, by reason of God's conduct in giving the scriptures to others. If any refuse to receive them because they are not known throughout the world, they discover great ingratitude, and perverseness. God has conferred upon us, the inhabitants of the United States of America, a larger portion of freedom than is possessed by most nations. Shall we murmur, and throw away our liberties, because providence has not caused all our fellow-men to enjoy the same blessings ? Who hath licensed a worm of the dust to dictate to the sovereign Ruler of heaven and earth ! Or to say unto him, " What doest thou ! "

3dly. It is owing to the criminal indifference of mankind to the scriptures, that the knowledge of them is confined within such narrow limits. Had, for instance, the several families of the sons of Noah, in their dispersions from the plain in the land of Shinar, been friends to the truths which had at that time been revealed, they would

have faithfully preserved them, and made high exertions to transmit them to their posterity. Had the word of the Lord been sweet unto their taste, they would have been much more desirous of handing it down to their successors, than they were their knowledge of the arts. A like pious zeal passing from one generation to another, would have prevented the ignorance of divine revelation which soon prevailed. By the time of Abraham there was a general departure to idolatry. That renowned patriarch sojourned in many places, after he left Ur of the Chaldees in obedience to the command of God ; for the setting up his worship in a pure form. But the people among whom he resided, in Canaan, in Egypt, and in other countries, did not improve the opportunity of learning from him the truths and laws which he had immediately communicated to him from God, or had been transmitted to him through the preceding inspired men. The Egyptians paid no lasting attention to the mighty works wrought among them by the arm of Jehovah, in the days of Moses ; nor did they regard the means of instruction in the knowledge of the revealed will of God, to which they might have had access. When the Israelites were settled in Canaan, they were placed in the central spot

of the then known world. On different sides of them lay Egypt, Arabia, Syria, Chaldea, and Assyria; out of which nations arose the first empires of note among mankind. Under those monarchies the arts and sciences were first cultivated, and from them have been spread among the inhabitants of the western regions. The land given to the children of Israel is washed on one side by the Mediterranean sea, and bordered on the once famous cities of Tyre and Sidon; which extended their commerce to distant countries. To the nations of the east the chosen people were well known, whilst they dwelt in Canaan. By their captivity under the Assyrians and Chaldeans, the sacred books were carried into many parts of Asia; where they were kept by the dispersed Jews until the day when the Messiah appeared. In the ages which followed the return of some of the captives to Jerusalem under Cyrus, and the rebuilding of their city and temple, the Jews became well known to the Greeks and the Romans. The Apostles in their time carried the gospel far beyond the bounds of Judea, and preached the word of eternal life among the Gentiles.

If there had been a general love of divine truth among the human race, the scriptures

would have been disseminated far and wide on this inhabited globe. From the inattention to the inspired writings which has appeared in the conduct of mankind, it is manifest that they have not chosen to retain God in their knowledge. Instead of charging him with an unjust partiality, let them confess that sin is the cause of the extensive reign of heathen darkness. It is wholly owing to the mere sovereign mercy of God, that the knowledge of divine revelation has not perished from the earth.

HAVING taken a brief view of some of the principal arguments in support of the truth and inspiration of the Bible, and attempted to obviate several objections, I proceed to improve the subject.

1. WE may reflect on the unreasonable and dangerous conduct of those who are endeavoring to undermine, and destroy the influence of revealed religion ; by representing it as the work of visionary or interested men. Many of the deists have never given themselves the trouble of examining into the evidences of the truth and inspiration of the scriptures ; but having picked up here and there something which they dislike in them, either by desultory reading, or from promiscuous company, they proceed to assert

with great confidence, that those writings are the work of a mercenary priesthood, or designing politicians. Such treatment of a book which claims a divine origin, not only announces the badness of their hearts who thus hastily reject it, but does no honor to their understandings. Among the few infidels who have gone into elaborate disquisitions concerning the authority of the scriptures, methods have been adopted, by men of genius and science, to overthrow those writings, which carry in them the grossest absurdities. If the same kind of reasoning were employed on any other subject, they themselves would look upon it with contempt. For the sake of evading the evidence from miracles, deists have labored to establish such rules, for determining the existence of facts of which we have not been personal witnesses, as would destroy our faith in all history. They have fallen into errors of the most palpable kind, in their attempts to prove that the Bible is at variance with itself. As, for instance, when the different writers of any part of its history, do not say precisely the same thing, or one of them mentions facts omitted by another, infidels reject the whole as the contradictory accounts of lying imposters. At the same time they will give full credit to many au-

thors of civil history, who, in narrating the same general events, mention different circumstances from each other, and will speak of such historians with applause. Deists will grant that God may destroy countries by the pestilence, famine, or earthquakes ; but if he employ men as the instruments of his wrath, as he did in cutting off the inhabitants of Canaan, they cry out, *cruelty ! horrid cruelty !* They overlook the proof of the inspiration of the scriptures, which is furnished by miracles of the most striking kind. They shut their eyes against the light that shines with meridian brightness, in the fulfilment of the prophecies. They withhold no exertions, in their power, to heap reproach upon that pure and benevolent religion, which corresponds with the divine character, opens a door of hope to the guilty, and conducts the humble and the penitent to a world of everlasting joy. The open enemies of the gospel, strive to bring into universal contempt the only religion that can reconcile mankind to God, and unite them in permanent love to one another. Infidels themselves are very much indebted, for their speculative knowledge of the Deity and moral virtue, to the Bible. By rejecting it they discover their ingratitude, and short sightedness.

WHAT advantages do deists expect to derive from trampling under foot the holy scriptures? They have nothing to put in the place of the doctrines which they explode, that can yield them solid enjoyment in their gayest seasons. What consolation can their principles afford, when carried into practice, in days of trouble, or in the hour of serious reflection? Their philosophy cannot alleviate their pains; by assuring them of a future state, or by pointing out the road which leads to substantial interminable happiness. But do they wish to rid themselves of the belief of a future state of rewards and punishments? and hope to die like the brutes? Wonderful sagacity! What! do the honor and happiness of man stand on a level with the honor and happiness of the beasts of the field!

WHAT benefit will society derive from the spread of deistical principles? Have they ever when fully imbibed, reformed a single vicious person? Experience demonstrates that in proportion as they prevail among a people, they weaken reverence towards the name of God, and are accompanied with loose morals. Such are the unhappy effects which infidelity produces: nor can they be denied on account of the regular lives of a

few of its friends, who are immerfed in ftudy, or whose high official rank impels to pay a decent refpect to the general opinion. Civil laws will be found feeble restraints on communities, when the restraints of revealed religion are destroyed.

THOSE who make a direct attack on the facred volume are highly criminal. Nothing can juftify them in acting againft the light that is held up before them, in the word and works of God. None are required to believe the fcriptures without fufficient evidence to fatisfy the rational mind ; but fince they are abundantly fupported by the fcheme of religion they contain, as well as by external testimonies, none can deny their divine original without incurring infinite guilt. The difficulties that have been ftarted relative to their hiftory, their faith and morals, may be removed to the fatisfaction of the candid. It is impious in creatures to fuggeft that a better manifeftation of truth might have been made than is exhibited in them. There is a depth in God's wifdom and knowledge which we cannot fathom. He only knows how to difplay his perfeftions before finite intelligencies in the beft manner to glorify his holy name, and what are the moft fuitable means to bring finners

to repentance. A cavilling temper is never satisfied. If any will not hear Moses and the Prophets, Christ, and the Apostles, neither would they be persuaded tho' one rose from the dead.

WHAT confusion would fill the mind of a deist, should one of his converts address him in the moment of remorse, " You, Sir, first taught me to laugh at religion—then to doubt its truth—and then to trample it under foot. I followed you next into vice—I threw off restraint—I have not feared God, nor have I regarded man. I tremble to think of my end: For tho' I still wish to disbelieve, my conscience whispers—*what if the gospel I have denied should prove true at last !*" How, O ye sons of infidelity ! who boast of making disciples to your creed, and to every fashionable vice—how can ye endure to meet the souls you have deluded and undone, at the bar of God ! They will rise as swift witnesses against you before him who will judge the world in righteousness. Be entreated to read the scriptures with a candid, serious temper, and impartially examine the arguments which establish their truth and inspiration. God grant that you may no longer

remain enemies of the Gospel ; but that it may be rendered effectual to your salvation.

2. IN a review of the subject of these discourses, we are taught the duty of the friends of revealed religion, to labor for its defence, and to make it the guide of their lives.

WE declare with our lips our belief in the truth and inspiration of the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and that the enjoyment of them is a privilege of inestimable worth. We profess a high veneration for these writings ; because they contain a rich and inexhaustible treasure of divine knowledge, and because they point out the only way to escape everlasting misery, and to obtain eternal life. We cannot testify our gratitude for having the oracles of God committed unto us, if we do not search into their meaning with diligence, and listen to them with a humble and devout frame of mind. The man of real piety, delights in the law of the Lord, and in it doth he meditate day and night. He crieth after knowledge, and lifteth up his voice for understanding ; he seeketh her as silver, and searcheth for her as for hidden treasures. It is surprising to find in some persons of mature age and good abilities, among the professed

friends of the Bible, but a small acquaintance with its history or doctrines. Instead of attending to the word of the Lord their minds are swallowed up in worldly pursuits, or are diverted from the study of it, by books of wit and humour.

MANY of the difficulties which occur in the reading of the scriptures, will be removed by comparing one passage with another, relative to the same subject in different parts of those writings. The doctrines which they contain that far surpass our comprehension, cannot be eradicated without giving up the sacred volume into the hands of its avowed enemies, and placing it on the same ground with the works of a heathen Plato, or Seneca. Those who humbly wait on God will be guided into all necessary truths: "The meek will he guide in judgment; and the meek will he teach his way." Believers will be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

THERE is reason to expect from present appearances, and from the prophecies, that the church will meet with violent assaults from infidelity, between the period in which we live, and the time when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Now, when the en-

emy is coming in like a flood, we are loudly called upon to lift up a standard against him. The performance of this duty, requires our attention to the arguments which demonstrate the scriptures to be true, and from God; and our earnest endeavors to maintain the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. Christian teachers are under a peculiar and solemn charge, to continue in the things which they have learned of Jesus Christ; and to labor to impress the belief on the minds of others, that *all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*. Above all, let every friend of revealed religion imbibe its spirit, and obey its laws. If we love the word of the Lord, we shall place a high value on the sabbath, and on all divine institutions: And shall bear testimony against the various courses which dishonor God, and tend to destroy mankind. Let parents teach their children the doctrines and duties of christianity, and enforce their instructions by a holy example.

DOth the gospel point out immortality to man, let this solemnize our minds, and incite us to give diligence to make our calling and election sure. Nothing can counterbalance the loss of the soul. What are all

the pleasures, the riches, and the honors of the world, when compared with "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away !" Let us remember that the grace of God which bringeth salvation, "teacheth us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world ; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

3. I SHALL conclude these discourses with an address to the rising generation.

DEAR YOUTH,

You are coming into active life in a day very different, in several respects, from any former period. The late revolution in our country has extended its influence far and wide ; and appears designed by providence to draw after it a train of consequences, whose importance rises to a height that baffles the calculations of the human mind. We are bound to give thanks to God for the rare privilege we enjoy of discussing every subject as publicly as we please, and of expressing our sentiments without restraint. It is a melancholy thought that when so wide a door is opened for the spreading of truth,

error and wickedness prevail. Popery and superstition have received a deep wound; at the same time infidelity lifts up its head, and open vices make swift and alarming progress. The heart of man is the same now as it ever has been since the apostacy; but it shows itself in a different form from what it has usually done among christian nations, and calls in principles to justify its criminal indulgencies with more confidence than had before been seen. Many in our day give out that the age of reason is come, and that mankind may now determine for themselves what is virtue and what is vice, without any regard to the scriptures. They seem to think themselves at full liberty, in the sight of God, to reject any revelation he may make, without incurring his displeasure. If our choice be the only rule of conduct that is binding upon us, we are placed in a lawless universe, and are not accountable to God.

PAUSE a moment—and reflect on the evil and danger of being led astray by opinions which flatter the pride of the heart, and are an inlet to every vice. If you regard your own peace and safety, you will not listen to men who set their mouth against the heavens, and advocate the cause of licentiousness.

Look on the effects of infidelity upon those who are scoffing at the Bible, and are striving to influence others to treat it with contempt. Do they appear to have the fear of God before their eyes? Can you believe that their real aim is to promote your true happiness? A sense of propriety, must render a set of low characters disgusting to you, who belch out their hatred of religion in the noisy clubs, where serious thoughtfulness is banished, and where ardent spirits animate the blustering hero of the night. Pity the poor creature who curses the book which forewarns him of his awful fate, and commands him to lead a life of temperance and sobriety. From persons of a different description you are in much greater danger of being proselyted to infidelity. You may in your intercourse with mankind, meet with deists whose talents are respectable, and whose address is engaging. These will consult your feelings, and will not shock you with a sudden proposal of renouncing the christian faith; but will suggest doubts relative to its historical truth, or the fitness of its doctrines, or the justice of its precepts.

It is not to be expected that those who have been trained up, from their childhood,

in the belief of the scriptures, will renounce them at once, and instantly take a leap into the abyfs of deifm. Persons who make this dreadful plunge, ufually advance towards it from fmall beginnings. You will progrefs towards the gulph which has fwallowed up the avowed enemies of the Bible, if you are in any degree entangled with what goes under the name of *Modern Liberality* ; which affirms, that it is a matter of perfect indifference what sentiments any adopt for their religious creed. It is not pretended by chriftians, that a mere affent to revealed doctrines forms a good character ; but they cannot be fo abfurd as to allow that all opinions are alike friendly to virtue. Is it as probable that the man who believes in annihilation at death, will refrain from perjury, as he who believes that he fhall exift in another world, and that there God will call him to an account for his conduct in this ? Have we the fame reason to look for purity in him who worfhips a flock or a ftone, as in him who worfhips Jehovah ? Infidels make high professions of liberality, as above defined : But if they fpeak their real sentiments, why do they make exertions to deftroy the faith of others in the Bible ? What caufe can they affign for their zeal in profelyting, if they ef-

teem it to be perfectly indifferent what creed any one adopts ?

WERE the Bible to perish from among us, there would be no means left, sufficient to prevent paying divine honors to the departed spirits of patriots and heroes, or even to the inanimate creation. The impious, obscene, and cruel rites of paganism would be established, should christianity cease to enlighten us ; and our religious state would be the same with that of by far the largest proportion of mankind now on the earth. Human science would not be found a sufficient guard to defend us against such evils ; for the learned Greeks and Romans were, at least, as much given to idolatry, as the savages that roam in the desert. The history of the whole heathen world from the days of Abraham until now, exhibits the same melancholy picture with Greece and Rome. A knowledge of the arts and sciences is very useful ; but cannot stand in the place of divine revelation.

If any should plead that the miseries which have flown from corrupt rituals would be avoided by annihilating every form of religion, they suppose a fact which can never generally happen, so long as hope and fear remain in the human breast. But if the e

vent they contemplate could be realized, each individual would feel himself licensed to live according to nature, and a scene of wretchedness would ensue, especially in large communities, far surpassing any thing the world has hitherto seen. Neither property, nor chastity, nor life, would be protected; and the earth would groan under the horrors of the infernal regions.

BEWARE, dear youth, of drinking in the poison of infidelity. Embrace the religion which came from above, and make it the guide of your lives. In this choice you will find light, peace, and joy, and will be secured from falling into fatal snares. Joseph, in the bloom of youth and beauty, was protected in a dangerous moment, by reverencing the laws of Jehovah. He replied to the importunate seducer, *How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* Impartially review the evidences of the truth and inspiration of the Bible. If you read this holy book with diligence and meekness, you will be charmed with the pure and benevolent spirit which it breathes; and will be fully persuaded that no being but God can be its author. The miracles recorded in the Old Testament and in the New, and the fulfil-

ment of the prophecies, give a divine sanction to the scriptures.

TRIFLE not away the morning of life in vain amusements, or in hearkening to fables. You are not creatures of a day ; but are born for eternity. The present momentary state will be followed with consequences of infinite importance. Secure without delay the glorious immortality set before you in the gospel. From early life may you know the holy scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus : To Him be glory for ever and ever. AMEN.

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